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J.H. 1827
A SERIES OF

PLAIN AND FAMILIAR
DISCOURSES

ON THE

APOSTLES' CREED,

DELIVERED IN THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. LUKE, CHELSEA,

BY THE

REV. JAMES HUTCHINS, M. A.

Trin. Coll. Cam.

CURATE OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. ANN AND AGNES, AND ST. JOHN ZACHARY,
ALDERSGATE, AND LECTURER OF ST. LUKE, CHELSEA.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Heb. XI. 1.

LONDON:

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TO THE HONOURABLE AND REVEREND
GERARD VALERIAN WELLESLEY, D.D. &c. &c.

RECTOR,

TO THE CHURCH TRUSTEES,

AND THE

INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF ST. LUKE, CHELSEA,

These Discourses

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR

FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED SERVANT,

JAMES HUTCHINS.

Chelsea, May, 1827.



P R E F A C E.

THE following Discourses were delivered by the Author, in the discharge of his duty, as Lecturer of a populous parish, in the Diocese of London, with the earnest desire of instructing the labouring and uneducated portion of his congregation in the fundamental and prominent doctrines of Christianity—and are now submitted to the attention of the public, at the solicitation of a higher class of his hearers, who were pleased to commend them. That the subjects of which they treat have been already frequently and much more ably discussed, can form no reasonable impediment to the present attempt, for each “in his vocation and ministry” is bound to do the best he can, and ought to expect his final sentence proportionate to the exertion of his respective talents. At all events, the doctrines comprised in the Apostles’ Creed require the intimate knowledge, and demand the intense interest of every sincere

Christian. They are, as it were, the corner stone of Religion—the stem which produces every Christian grace. It may be, therefore, expected that every Clergyman of our pure and venerable church should be fully qualified to impart to his hearers some useful instruction, and to contribute, in some degree, to the advancement of the word of truth. As a very humble labourer in the ministry of that eminently distinguished church, the Author of these Discourses has the privilege to be engaged, and he trusts, that, with the poor woman in the Gospel, he shall be considered to have “done what he could,” in support of her sacred cause. Aiming at these beneficial objects, he leaves the furtherance of the work in the hands of that Almighty Being, who alone can turn the sinner from the error of his way, and make those malignant principles, which so unhappily prevail, and which seem to indicate the approach of the last times, conducive to the increase and final establishment of His heavenly and eternal kingdom.

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

THE
INFIDELITY OF THE PRESENT AGE,
WITH ITS CAUSES.

2 Tim. 4, 2 and 3 part.

“Exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.”

THE predictions of the sacred prophets are acknowledged to contain in them, very frequently, a twofold signification ; the one literal, and having a near reference perhaps to the time in which they were delivered ; the other mystical, and waiting the lapse of many generations before their completion would arrive. Now, my brethren, from the evidence that we have recorded, both in sacred and prophane history of former times, and from that, which we can collect of the religious opinions and conduct of men, in the present age, we have this fact illustrated, which is contained in Saint Paul’s prophetic assurance to Timothy, in my text, and find that it

expresses a twofold meaning ; namely, that there would be men in the infancy of the gospel, as well as in the latter ages of the world, “ who would not endure sound doctrine.”

Long before the delivery of this solemn charge, our blessed Lord himself, had forewarned his disciples of the apostacy of many, “ who would be offended,” and betray one another, and “ whose love, because of iniquity, would wax cold.” And this declension of zeal thus foretold by the Master, the servants of Christ lived to see, in a great measure, fulfilled. Indeed, the whole epistle to the Hebrews seems intended to oppose and correct the lukewarmness and impiety which then existed ; for, when we read the several exhortations of the apostle, “ to hold fast the profession of faith without wavering ;”—“ not to forsake the assembling of themselves together ;”—“ but, to lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ;”—when we read in a prophane author,* much to be depended on, for his faithfulness as an historian, “ that the first christians were delivered up by their parents—their brethren—their kinsfolk and their friends ;” and in a Jewish historian† of no less repute, “ that contentions sprang up in their houses, and caused much bloodshed and indiscriminate slaughter ;”—when we possess such testimonies, both sacred and prophane, we can

* Tacitus. † Josephus.

entertain no doubt, that “the falling away,” implied in the text, did occur in former times, and that the apostle, from the most laudable, nay, imperative motives, urged his beloved Timothy “to exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.”

Adverting to the other prophetic meaning of the text, no serious person, who deliberately considers the character of the years that are still within our recollection, and the irreligious and impious principles that continue to be so universally circulated and so confidently maintained, can reasonably doubt that the prediction has been fully confirmed by the event. When, for instance, we have lived to see, and it was, indeed, a most awful confirmation of the truth of Saint Paul’s assertion—when we have lived to see, in a neighbouring nation the existence of a future state denied by legislative authority—the figure of Sleep erected, on the graves of the dead, and declaring their repose to be eternal:—when, we have seen those holy edifices, which were dedicated to God, and to his Christ, converted into heathen temples for the adoration of truth and reason, with all the degrading pageantry and adoration of the pagan priesthood;—when, we have witnessed these abominations, who can hesitate to allow the veracity of Saint Paul’s prediction, and say that, in a country not widely separated from our own shores, “they turned away their ears from the truth—turned unto fables,

and could not endure sound doctrine!"

And happy had it been for us if the waves that divide us from that land had also raised an impenetrable barrier to the propagation and adoption of her writings and opinions; or, that our soil and climate had been unfavorable to their deadly growth! But, we have had, and still have among ourselves bold, and, if my fears do not mislead me, increasing defenders of impiety, champions of the most false and blasphemous theories, who proclaim, and that too, in defiance of our very able laws, "that the age of reason is rapidly advancing to perfection; that man, is not a weak, and sinful, and dependant creature, and that there is no atonement through Jesus Christ." Nay further, my brethren, we are told by the members of a Society,* which is, at this moment, spreading its anti-christian tenets, "that the evidences of our religion are sophistical and false,—that the scriptures of the New Testament were not written by the persons whose names they bear,—that they did not appear at the times to which they refer; and that neither the persons of whom they treat, nor the facts which they relate, ever did exist."

Nor are these baneful doctrines confined to such persons as have the ability to investigate, and the judgment to decide for themselves, upon subjects of such everlasting import, but they are circulated with the

* Christian Evidence Society.

most assiduous zeal through every portion of these kingdoms, on the earth and under the earth,—upon the waters and on dry land,—in the field and in the city. And they have been disseminated, of late, particularly among that brave and meritorious order of our fellow subjects, who are raised up from the midst of us, to defend with their blood and lives our most sacred religious privileges and the existence of our unrivalled constitution.

Under such awful circumstances, and surrounded by such spreading dangers,—for, if these noxious tenets extirpate the seeds of christianity among us, our political existence will be destroyed, since both will terminate together,—what conduct is the best and safest to pursue? What weapons should we employ to contend against, and, with divine assistance, to overcome the malice of those, who would lay our Jerusalem even with the ground? With regard to the ministers of the gospel, the answer is clear and explicit. Our duty is plainly defined, in the solemn charge given to Timothy, by the great apostle of the Gentiles, a charge indeed, which will have a most serious and active effect upon all of us, who consider the arduous and solemn duty that we engaged to perform, when we were ordained to the sacred ministry of the church. “I charge thee,” says Saint Paul, “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word; be

instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

With this commission in remembrance, and recollecting at the same time, the declaration of the Almighty to his prophet,—“ When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, his blood will I require at thine hands ;”—the ministers of Christ will endeavour with all faithfulness to “ feed the flock that is amongst them,” “ to do the work of an evangelist, and to make full proof of their ministry.”

And you, my brethren, as christian hearers, enrolled among the heirs of salvation, and equally exposed to surrounding dangers, you have your appropriate duties to fulfil. You are bound, by the strongest obligations, to exert every energy to arrest, and suppress the effects of infidelity, to proclaim the doctrine of atonement, and to prepare for the second appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. You must “ endure sound doctrine,”—“ you must forsake heaping up to yourselves strange teachers ; you must not turn away your ears from the truth, nor be turned unto fables ; but, receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” By your authority, by your advice, and, especially, by your example, you must unite with your fellow christians to spread the word of God in its pure simplicity, to acknowledge the

eternal rewards and punishments proclaimed in the gospel, to place your whole dependance on a crucified Saviour for pardon and justification, and pray for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to change your corrupt natures, and to enable you to reach those heavenly mansions prepared for all who serve and love God in sincerity and truth! And, if such a conduct be not speedily adopted and permanently pursued; if, by these, and similar holy endeavours, the tares of the "wicked One," which are so thickly springing up around us, are not soon checked, and ultimately eradicated, they will wholly choke the good seed, and prove fatal to the happiness of the next, if they do not to the present generation.

It is not possible in the usual limits of a discourse, nor is it, indeed, necessary to my present design, to enumerate the various causes of that infidelity which unhappily exists. To those, however, which may be considered most striking, I shall briefly direct your attention, and you will, I think, confess them to be of that pernicious and alarming tendency, which should excite your earnest and constant endeavors to remove them from all whom you can either influence, or control.

In the first place, we may consider one leading cause of the prevailing corrupt opinions in society, to proceed from an Ignorance of the solemn truths of religion. Whatever we imperfectly know

we can never sincerely love. Uninfluenced by, or, but slightly acquainted with, the doctrines of christianity, our hearts must naturally remain corrupt; because there will then exist no obligation of sufficient force to check that proneness to evil, which we all find within us, and which, no human laws, how excellent, or severe soever, will be ever able to eradicate.—To this ignorance may be attributed the licentious conduct of the heathens; “their understandings were darkened,” says the Apostle, “and they were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them.” The first thing that the Almighty did, to change the face of the world, and to remove the general corruption, was, to dispel the clouds of ignorance, and to enlighten mankind with the knowledge of Himself by the preaching of the Gospel. And the method was effectual; for, “from being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, and maliciousness; from being full of envy, murder, deceit, and haters of God; proud, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful;” “they glorified God,” “they repented of their former sins,” “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and lived so piously, and so unlike what they had lived before, that, this strong testimony of the purity of their conduct is given by the younger Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, the Roman emperor. “The early

christians were wont," he observes, "to meet together on a stated day, before it was light, and to sing among themselves alternately an hymn to Christ, as God, and to bind themselves, by an oath not to commit any wickedness; not to be guilty of theft, of robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it." Such a change was wrought in the first christians by removing their ignorance of spiritual things, and by instructing them in the solemn truths of the Gospel!

Now, my brethren, if we cannot be charged with that gross ignorance under which the world groaned before the coming of the Messiah, yet, it must be confessed that, generally, we fall far short of the knowledge, which we ought to possess of religious doctrines. Among the multitudes of men who call themselves Christians, how few are there, for instance, who have scarcely bestowed one serious thought upon the condition, in which Christ found mankind, when he came into the world, and upon the awful revelations in his Gospel! How few are there, who can explain to their own minds, "that doubtless there is a God!" How few, that can give to their children and dependants convincing reasons to prove the Bible to be a divine book, and, therefore, to be prized above every other book, and to be made the directory of their lives! How few who have examined the declarations of Scripture, and

the inferences and corroborating deductions to be drawn from reason, which support and confirm the doctrines of future rewards and punishments! Striking exceptions there are, no doubt, to this general ignorance; nevertheless, they are few comparatively; they are few in proportion to those who are not able, and therefore, who are not ready to give "an answer to every man, that asketh, a reason of the hope that is in him." Where, therefore, there is so much Ignorance, no wonder there should be also so much infidelity.

Another cause of corrupt principles may be said to proceed from the want of religious Instruction, and this arises naturally from the former. I am aware that the assertion may appear somewhat extraordinary, especially in the present day, but yet, I believe it will prove to be generally true. If children are either unsoundly or imperfectly instructed, so far as their education shall be allowed to proceed; if they, who should bring up the rising generation, are either themselves ignorant, or careless of the doctrines of religion, whether in the character of parent, master, or appointed teacher, the same, if not a greater infidelity will prevail, than simple ignorance would alone produce. If in that tender age the youth of both sexes are not taught, as superior to every other knowledge, to love and reverence the supreme Being; to depend upon his providence; to adore

his goodness and mercy in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ; to pray for the guidance of the Holy Ghost; to look for the resurrection of the dead, and a judgment to come;—how can we expect them to pass through their future life, like accountable creatures? How can we imagine that they will be able “to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless?” “Train up a child,” enjoins the wise man, “in the way he should go,” because, habits that are formed at that time, generally continue to the last period of our existence.

Another cause of infidelity, and which is, in a great degree, the consequence of the former, is the prevalence of bad Example. We are children of imitation, and with great facility adopt the manners and opinions of our associates. Even in religion, which ought not, and does not depend upon the notions and caprices of men,—even in religion, whose truths are eternal, and are as impossible to change as their divine Author himself, who “is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever,” we are too much influenced by the conduct of others; and when they, who know better, are frequently so depraved in their principles and so licentious in their manners, we cannot be surprized that the poor and less educated, imitating their superiors in life, should become irreligious and profane.

Nor, again, are such only contaminated, who have acquired but little knowledge of the truths of

the gospel—even they, who have been more religiously educated, have often been materially, nay, irreparably injured by the influence of depraved example. I address myself to your own experience, and, perhaps some heart may acknowledge with painful recollection the force of the appeal. I ask you to reflect upon the following, not uncommon instance of the almost resistless power of corrupt example.—A young man, who has been instructed in religious principles and taught “to remember his Creator, in the days of his youth,” leaves the fostering shelter of his anxious parent with just impressions of his duty, and a resolution not to depart from the pious admonitions, which that parent with tears and blessings had bestowed. Fearful, he enters into the world, and, for some time, maintains his integrity amidst the busy scenes of life. But he beholds those, whom he was instructed to respect and obey; those, upon whose influence perhaps his future prospects may depend, leading a life of what is called, the world, neglecting the solemn duties, which he was led to believe formed the criterion of the christian character; treating his religious notions as enthusiastic, and violating the moral obligations which he was accustomed to revere. By example his fears diminish; by example his conscience relaxes; by example he loses the abhorrence of vice;—the repetition of offence gradually destroys the small repugnance that remains, and all his good disposi-

tions, all the impressive warnings of his parent, one by one, decay. The result, my brethren, may be easily conceived. He at length, swims with the stream, becomes the slave of vice and infidelity, and presents, in his own person, from the powerful influence of bad example, the very character, which was once the object of his deep and sincere disgust.

Numerous, unhappily, as are the instances that I could adduce to illustrate my subject, I shall only trouble you with one more, which is, indeed, a main prop of infidelity, and, which may be ranked amongst its most active causes,—namely, the existence and circulation of so many obscene and impious Writings. Books have been compared to fountains, from which are diffused, as in many channels, a variety of sentiments. If then the source should be polluted, polluted also must be the diverging streams. The young and thoughtless who frequently consider themselves convinced, when they only are delighted and amused, are the most likely to be injured by this baneful cause. Fond of novelty, they easily imbibe the loose principles and the mortal poison which are presented under that fascinating form. Imposed upon by the wit, the style, the learning of the writer, and, not well grounded in religious knowledge, they are bewildered by the first objections that are raised; and doubt once excited, disbelief will soon succeed. To the young, then, such publications prove the school of infidelity,—and to others, alas! of whom we might

expect better things, they become the fuel to inflame the violence of those passions, which ought to have been long since subdued and forgotten. The time was, my brethren, when the authors of such works, if not from shame, yet, from motives of personal security, concealed their names and abode;—the time is, when they are esteemed by the multitude, and receive public applause and ample remuneration.

That these fruitful causes of impiety exist is too evident to be denied; and it is equally evident, that from them has spread, and is spreading the infidelity of which we complain. The evils are much too deeply rooted to be remedied by any individual effort. The ministers and the people, then, must both unite in zealous and judicious measures to resist their influence. We must ourselves, my brethren, obtain a perfect knowledge of the doctrines of natural and revealed religion, and impart to others, as far as we are able, the same essential information. When we are firmly persuaded of the existence of God, and have unfolded, by reason and scripture, the nature of his attributes; when we are acquainted with the merciful scheme of redemption, by Jesus Christ, and know how to value and apply for the aid of the Holy Spirit; when we seriously look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come; we shall possess invincible arguments to put to “silence the ignorance of foolish men,” and be compelled by the highest motives

“to walk worthy of the vocation whereby we are called.” Able, and desirous to disperse the clouds of ignorance, which now, in a great degree, obscure the glorious light of the gospel, we shall bring up our children and dependants “in the fear and admonition of the Lord,” and impart even to their posterity that knowledge and love of God, which “shall make them wise unto salvation.”

Lastly. This desirable object can only be promoted by a thorough knowledge of, and practical belief in, the groundwork of our religion. To forward which, I propose, with the blessing of God, to submit to your attention, on the succeeding Sunday evenings, the various articles of the Apostles’ Creed, in a manner so plain, and, as I hope, so convincing, that some service may be rendered to the cause of christianity, To make these lectures useful, which is my highest aim, you will afford me your regular attendance, and fervently implore the divine assistance on my feeble labours. You will enter this sacred place with teachable and unprejudiced minds, resolved to listen to instruction and receive reproof, though they may be hostile to your darling pleasures. You will hearken with attention to the doctrines delivered, or explained, remembering that they are not the doctrines, of frail and erring mortals, like ourselves; but doctrines revealed by God, confirmed by miracles, supported by the noble army of martyrs, and which concern our ever-

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lasting happiness. Aided, my brethren, by your sincere concurrence, the seed thus sown, will spring up, and bring forth abundantly ; and the labours of the planter and the waterer, shall be blessed by Him who alone can give the increase.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

Psalm 58, Part of 10th.

"Doubtless there is a God."

It may be recollected by many present, that in my last discourse, I specified some of the principal sources of that infidelity, which, unhappily, prevails among us, and suggested, that the most likely means, under providence, to oppose and correct it, was to explain and enforce the doctrines of our holy religion; concluding, that when we are firmly persuaded of the existence of a first cause, and have confirmed by reason and scripture, the nature of the divine attributes; when we have unfolded the merciful scheme of redemption, by Jesus Christ, and have learned how to value, and apply for the aid of the Holy Spirit; when we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come;—we shall be compelled by motives of the most obligatory force, “to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith we are called, and become prepared by our religious knowledge “to put to

silence the ignorance of foolish men."

As the doctrines of our holy religion—those, which, either our blessed Lord himself, or his apostles taught, have been collected together into a compendium of faith, from the earliest age of christianity, and are contained in that brief form, which is called the Apostles' Creed, and which we repeat when we meet together in the house of God,—it is from that formulary, that I shall select my subjects for the following Lectures. Whether this Creed was composed by the apostles themselves, or, whether it derives that name from its strict coincidence with the doctrines which they delivered, respecting the existence and personality of a Trinity in the Godhead, and the concurring interest that they take in the salvation of our sinful race, is a point, in the present instance, by no means, necessary to discuss. We can all perceive its perfect agreement with the language and spirit of the holy scriptures, and we must all acknowledge, how much it is our duty,—how much our present, and ultimate happiness, to believe its doctrines, and to guide our lives by its sacred truths.

As a belief in the existence of a divine Being, who possesses from eternity infinite power, knowledge, justice, truth, and goodness, is the foundation of all religion, our Creed very properly begins with the solemn profession, "I believe in God." It is on this corner stone that the superstructure of our

faith must be raised—otherwise, the fabric, like the house built on the sand of the sea, will soon fall into ruin, and leave not a trace behind. Whereas a faith grounded on the existence of a first cause will be strong and permanent, and gradually advance to the reception of those other doctrines, which are absolutely necessary to our salvation. No human being was ever more sensible of this important truth than David, the inspired author of my text. His compositions declare in the most glowing and expressive language, the existence of an Almighty God. That persuasion it was, which enabled him to lift up his head in all his troubles, under the various persecutions of Saul and his evil minded counsellors, and to exclaim with the utmost confidence, “ Verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth.”

In order to prove, that we do rightly to believe in God,—to believe in the existence of that supreme and independent Being, who has existed from all eternity, and who is the first cause of all things in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; I shall submit to your attention the following arguments, which, however familiar they may be to the minds of many present, yet, I cannot consistently with my design forbear using, because they are considered to be forcible and conclusive, and are usually adverted to when

ever this first principle of all natural and revealed religion is sought to be established.

And the first argument is,—that something must have existed from all eternity,—which is undeniably true,—because, as something now is, it is manifest that something always was,—otherwise the things, which now exist, must have been produced out of nothing,—which is a contradiction too gross to be admitted. For whatever exists has a cause of its existence, if not in the necessity of its own nature, yet in the will of some other being; and then, that other being must have existed before it. As well might we, and indeed, with a greater degree of reason, imagine that the works of man, were produced by their own inherent power, as, that the world was created by any other, than an independent and eternal first cause. Curiously contrived and intricately arranged as are many of the inventions of human genius, yet no one conceives that they were self-created,—no one doubts they were all wrought,—all perfected by the skilful hand of the mechanic. What then, my brethren, the artist is to the works of art, the same, though at an immeasurable distance, is God to all created beings,—God, who first formed,—God, “who in the beginning created the heaven, the earth.”

A second train of argument to prove that “doubtless there is a God,” is derived from—the general testimony of mankind. Nothing, indeed, appears

more certain; than, that the existence of God was admitted by the most eminent men of all nations and of different ages: for, although right notions of the Deity have been sadly corrupted, either by unworthy representations of the true God, or, by adding to his worship a number of false Gods, yet do those very corruptions prove the belief of a first cause to have been universal. The following testimonies, out of the many that I might bring forward, of men, who lived in times of the greatest science and refinement, during the unenlightened days of reason, present an authority as convincing as any can be, short of the evidence of holy writ.

“ We are authorized,” observes Seneca, a philosopher distinguished for his rank and learning, “ to attribute much to what all men admit. It is an argument with us of truth, that any thing seems to be true at all. That there be Gods we hence collect,—because all men have engrafted in them an opinion concerning Gods,—neither, is there a nation so void of laws and good manners, which does not believe that there are some Gods.”

In the following terms has this universal consent been accounted for by Cicero, one of the greatest orators of antiquity, who has immortalized himself by the excellent moral precepts which he framed for an unworthy son, and by many sentiments dispersed in his works, which tend to establish the same doctrine. “ Since,” says he, “ the opinion of

a God is established, not by custom, by any institution, or law,—but, without exception, by a firm consent,—it is, therefore, necessary, that there should be Gods—we having implanted, or inbred notions concerning them:—for, about whatever men do naturally agree, that must be true.”

Another very eminent philosopher, has written still more strongly upon the subject, informing us, “that not only the belief of a God was prevalent,” but, also, that “heaven” was considered to be the place of his residence. “All men,” says Aristotle, “have an opinion concerning the Gods,” and all men assign the highest places to the Gods, both Greeks and barbarians.”

Without troubling you with any more instances, I shall close this part of the subject by observing, that in every period of the world, men went much farther than mere declaration, and that they discovered their ideas concerning the existence of a Deity as much by their actions, as by their writings. For, they invoked divine help in times of danger,—sacrifices steamed upon their altars for benefits that were either expected, or received. They sang hymns and praises to God,—they appointed priests for the service of the temple,—they made vows,—they presented gifts,—they celebrated festivals,—in short, as far as unenlightened nature could do, they testified their belief in a Deity.

Before, therefore, we permit our faith in God to

be staggered by the sophistry of artful and interested men, we ought to recollect, what has been the general opinion of the world concerning this most important doctrine, and to satisfy ourselves whether we act wisely, or not, in suffering our mind to be distracted with uncertainty, and in finally abandoning that rock which has stood firm and unshaken from the beginning of the world, and which will afford to all who build upon it, a sure and everlasting foundation.

The next proof that I shall advance to shew the existence of God, is of a nearer and more familiar nature, and drawn from the frame and constitution of the universe.

Every thing around us declares the energy of a great first cause. If we look upwards, we behold a vast and spacious firmament, magnificent, beyond imagination, or description. Amidst the brilliant orbs that roll in space, we see and feel that splendid sun—faint image of its maker's glory! which enlightens, warms and animates our system, and without whose cheering influence, all life, all vegetation, all motion in the animal and vegetable world would be destroyed, and this our globe become a lump of matter, useless and congealed.

Descending next to the vegetable part of the creation, such striking proofs of the existence and government of a supreme Being occur, in every direction, that we need neither be deep philoso-

phers, nor skilful naturalists to discover, that “doubtless there is a God.” The meanest plant is so contrived to complete its respective and necessary operations—that, either in its figure, order, temperament, contexture, or, any other arrangement, we trace the divine creating hand. “Grass groweth for the cattle,” observes the psalmist, “and “herb” or grain for the children of men.” Such appears the merciful œconomy of the Almighty parent, for, as grass cannot be cultivated, by those, for whom it is chiefly designed, so the earth produces it spontaneously for the brute creation:—and as man, for whom herb, or grain is necessary, can, from his superior power, till and plant the ground, so his food is seldom produced or adapted to his purpose, without his own labour and concurrence. If we learn this leading doctrine from the vegetable part of the creation, no less are we supplied with instances to confirm it from a consideration of the animal world. What organs of sense have the beasts of the field to discern that which is necessary, convenient and agreeable, and to avoid whatever is dangerous, offensive and destructive! What evident relation also, do we trace between the common desires of each animal, and its natural place of abode! We find that the very soil is peculiar to the creature which it is intended to support, and that the place that gave it birth, affords it, with very few exceptions, both security and food. For every thing that hath

breath, these merciful provisions have been made. "The eyes of all," exclaims the Psalmist with rapture, "wait upon God, who giveth them their meat in due season, who openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

And still more evidently do all these considerations apply to Man. Indeed the whole creation appears to have been formed in subservience to that Being, "who was made in the image of God, and but one step lower than the Angels! To man's preservation, comfort, and delight, every thing in nature seems intended to administer. Fallen, alas! from his state of innocence, and expelled the scenes of paradise, yet he still preserves that distinction which the Creator gave him at the hour of his formation, and maintains "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Its hidden bowels yield him various, valuable, and exhaustless treasures;—its surface produces seeds, herbs, and fruits, to nourish and support his body, to please his taste, to exhilarate his spirits, to relieve and cure his diseases. Stately forests enrich his prospects, affording fuel for his fire, and materials for his abode. The mountains find him with streams of water. The ocean contributes to supply his board, and carries his superfluous property to a distant clime. The winds themselves, unruly and destructive as they sometimes are, conduce to his existence,

purifying the air he breathes, collecting or dispelling the clouds, which drop fatness on his pastures, and yield him the fruits of increase. The farther, indeed, we trace the glorious work of creation, the more sensible we must be of the agency of some Being infinitely good and gracious, who directs all nature to wonderful and excellent purposes, and preserves around us that admirable order and consistency, which must extort from the least reflecting mind, the confession, that “doubtless there is a God.”

Before, my brethren, I close this part of my subject, I will briefly state a question which has been so often proposed, and ask,—whether all these arrangements, all these wonders can be ascribed to necessity, or chance? Could these ever-changing causes, names in this instance evidently void of all meaning, form the world,—divide the waters from the dry land,—ordain the sun to rule the day, the moon and the stars the night? Would they produce those vicissitudes of the seasons, which diversify the year, giving seed time and harvest? Could these causes pour out all the blessings,—load us with all the benefits,—crown us with all the loving-kindness we day by day enjoy? Are we only to thank fabled images, only to bless creatures of our own imagination for all these favours, and are we to look up to them as our parent, and confess ourselves to be their offspring? Gracious God! can

any whom thou hast endued with the faculty of reason, be so senseless, so perverse! Do not, O Lord,—do not the evidences of thy existence,—do not the proofs of thy goodness, so plainly appear in the frame and constitution of the world that every candid, every reflecting, every humble mind must confess—“that doubtless there is a God!” To Thee, O Lord! we must attribute the operations of nature, and to Thee alone,—and in profound admiration, we exclaim in the words of thy servant David—“How manifest are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all—the earth is full of thy goodness.”

The next proof, my brethren, I shall offer to your attention, is taken from the frame of human nature.

Indeed, as Saint Paul observes, “the eternal power and divinity of God” may be seen in all the works of God,—but much more visibly do those attributes appear in man, the masterpiece, as it were, of the creation, holding the most eminent station amongst all earthly beings, bearing in his “form divine” the stamp of the great original, and evidencing indubitably the existence of God.

The argument is usually constructed in some such way as this. Man, must have originally proceeded from some efficient cause—or, must either have sprung from himself, or, have existed from all eternity.—Now that man did not spring from himself, is collected from the consent of all nations, and from

the very manner of his production, which is in the way of successive generation, and according to a method admirably produced by nature:—and that man did not exist from all eternity may be proved by reason and experience. For, where has it been recorded that man has continued for ever? Do we not, in every history that we read, find that men die, either according to the course of nature, exhausted by years and infirmities, or carried off by some of those accidents which curtail the span of life? Are we not certain that the oldest of our friends had no existence threescore, or, at most, fourscore years ago; and, that although we ourselves now move, and have our being, yet, that in a few more years, with regard to this world, we shall cease to be? From what cause then did we proceed? As instruments in the hand of providence, our parents gave us birth;—but, could our parents endue us with all those wonderful faculties of mind and body that we possess? Moreover, who gave them their being?—As man did neither spring from himself, nor has existed from all eternity, our parents also must have derived their being from some first cause,—and that cause could be no other than the Almighty, infinite, and everlasting God.

To this convincing conclusion, I will just add how much, though in so imperfect a degree, we resemble God. How, for instance, we are endued with such exquisite faculties as to be able to extend

our thoughts to futurity,—to survey in imagination the remotest regions of the earth,—to review ages long since crumbled into dust,—to feel inclination to do good,—to approve virtuous and pious actions,—to unfold the mysteries of nature,—to invent various arts and sciences, and to contrive and execute schemes of policy and advantage. Such, still, continues to be the nature of man, though so sadly changed since it came from the hands of his Creator! In his fallen state, we still read in large and legible characters the affinity we bear to our heavenly Parent. The marks of the Deity are visibly stamped upon our souls, and prove that the hand which made us is divine. If, then, we attribute our existence to any other cause than to the Almighty God, we must commit the most gross absurdity,—we must attribute it to something which is beneath, and inferior to ourselves.

Other proofs might be produced from supernatural, or miraculous effects, as related in profane history, to establish the point in question; but by so doing, there would be no room left to advert to those evidences recorded in sacred scripture, of which, should even one be true, it would be sufficient to confirm the proposition,—“that doubtless there is a God.” You will, therefore, attentively regard this interesting part of our subject, and determine for yourselves. Could the divine vengeance and justice ever be more timely displayed,

than on Korah and his blasphemous company—than on Sennacherib—and Herod, who defied the power of the Almighty and abused mankind by their injustice? Could oppression and murder be more awfully punished, than in Jezebel, for her conduct towards Naboth,—or, in Haman, for his malice towards Mordecai? Could the remarkable providence of God—his love of piety, and his encouragement of virtue, be more strongly illustrated than in the histories of Abraham—of Joseph—of David—of Daniel—and of numberless others, which are well known, and to which, from the proofs, already given, you will consider it perhaps sufficient thus briefly to have adverted? It is, then, upon these substantial grounds we proclaim “that doubtless there is a God.” These are the evidences, which though now so feebly offered to your consideration are amply sufficient to confirm,—that some omnipotent cause must have existed from all eternity. The general testimony of mankind,—the nearer and more familiar conclusions drawn from the consideration of the frame and construction of the universe, and particularly of human nature,—the supernatural effects related in profane history, and the instances of a superintending Providence recorded in sacred writ,—contribute to establish, beyond the possibility of a rational doubt, this first, this corner stone of all religion,—“that doubtless there is a God.”

Conscious, my brethren, of this truth, receive in

conclusion the apostle's advice to the Hebrews,—
“take heed, lest there be an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Conscious of a superintending providence and knowing that a time will come, when the arm of flesh cannot support, or save us,—let us constantly and strenuously exert all our powers of mind and body to act in that manner, which our reason tells us, and our religion assures us, will please so great—so good—so all wise a Being. And, as we must feel, and have, alas! often experienced, that with our utmost endeavours to pursue the paths of holiness, we frequently deviate therefrom; let us daily implore the aid of divine grace, in the name of Jesus Christ, that with the belief in God, he may graft in our hearts the love of God. May He increase in us true religion,—nourish us with all goodness, and of His infinite mercy keep us in the same, during our pilgrimage through this vain and transitory life, so that when our course be ended, we may be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting!

GOD OUR FATHER.

Matthew 23rd, 9.

“Call no man your father upon the earth,—for one is your Father, who is in Heaven.”

IN my last discourse, I endeavoured to prove, as many of you may remember, the existence of a Supreme Being, which is the first article in the Apostles' creed;—and, in order to illustrate the doctrine, you were reminded of the following arguments,—that some first cause must have existed from all eternity;—that such an opinion generally prevailed among men, who lived in times of the greatest science and refinement, during the unenlightened days of reason; that it was confirmed by the nearer and more familiar conclusions, drawn from the consideration of the frame and structure of the universe, and particularly of human nature;—by many supernatural effects related in profane history; and, lastly, by the striking instances of a superintending Providence recorded in holy writ.

This doctrine established, we proceed now to consider the Almighty God in a character truly

amiable, and most interesting to every pious mind. Whilst the relationship of a Father commands our obedience and respect,—it excites, at the same time, our love and gratitude, and binds us to our duty by the warmest affections of the heart,—for, what can be more consoling under the pressure of sickness or misfortune, than to know that our heavenly Father commiserates our sufferings? What can give more life and animation to our devotions, than the consciousness, that we are addressing an affectionate Parent, who can, and will grant, all that is expedient for us? And what can more powerfully incline us “to love as brethren,”—“to be kind and courteous one to another,” than the knowledge that we are children of our common Father, to whom we shall be hereafter finally gathered, and with whom, if we have acted properly in that endearing connexion, we shall exist through all the countless ages of eternity? Many other characters in which the Holy Scriptures represent the Deity, are exceedingly awful, and fill our hearts with apprehension;—but to view the great Omnipotent, the self-existent, everlasting God, as our Father, is surely to consider Him in the most delightful point of view, is to consider Him more the object of our hope and regard, than of our dread and fearful contemplation.

That we do rightly to call upon, and to “believe in God,” as our “Father,”—which is the second

article in the Apostles' Creed, we are able to prove from the highest authority, even from the command of the ever blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who came from heaven to restore the sinful race of Adam to all the privileges forfeited by the fall,—and to instruct them in every truth which concerns their faith and practice. As our blessed Lord, a short time previous to his crucifixion, was warning the multitude against the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, He embraced the opportunity of correcting a prevailing error, and of directing their minds to the true object of adoration. The Jewish doctors artfully taught the people, that existence was no existence, unless improved and refined by knowledge;—and, that, as it was their office, both to inform the minds of the ignorant, and to recover the idolater from the worship of idols, they gave men, by those acts, their real being and became their true and best parents. On these fallacious grounds, and ambitious of distinction and greedy of superiority, they arrogantly assumed to themselves the appellation of “Rabbi,” “Master,” and “Father.” To correct this assumption, so unjust in their case from the motives that produced it, our Saviour prohibited his disciples, from taking upon themselves, or giving to any one, this expressive title. “Call no man your Father upon the earth,” says he, “for one is your Father, who is in heaven.”—As if he had said, “to that exalted parent, to the Supreme Being, you owe

“ your life, with all its blessings—to Him alone your
“ praise and thanks should be ultimately given ;—
“ and to praise rightly, you must not exalt the teacher,
“ but the wisdom of Jehovah, which hath condescen-
“ ded to make him the instrument of imparting such
“ knowledge to his brethren.”

On this undeniable authority we acknowledge God to be our “ Father,”—and as the several parts of his character, in this endearing relation, have been already generally noticed, I shall proceed to remark the proper influence, which this consolatory doctrine should have upon our future conduct.

The first application of the term “ Father ” to the Almighty, is grounded upon that act, which gives birth to all the rest,—namely, “ His being the efficient cause, or creator of all things—whether in the heavens above—in the earth beneath,—or in the waters under the earth.” “ He hath commanded them ” says the Psalmist, “ and they were created ”—“ He hath established them for ever and ever—He hath made a decree which they shall not pass—He hath provided for all things living,—they all wait upon Him. He giveth them their meat in due season—and whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doth He in heaven, and in earth.”

This general sense of the term, in which the Almighty is distinguished as the “ Father of all things”—directs our attention to its more particular import—“ that He is the Father of all mankind.”

Adam is called the Son of God, because he was made after his Father's likeness, and resembled Him in the properties of his nature, and the eminence of his condition. All the inferior orders of the creation, indeed, stand connected with the Almighty, as their "Maker,"—but Man is so, in a much more intimate and eminent degree. Man, must regard him as his Parent, who has provided all things for his use and comfort, and ordained that every other creature should exist, as his servant, whilst he himself liveth the child of an indulgent father. Indeed, when we reflect upon God's peculiar love and tenderness towards mankind, either by supplying them with the necessities of life, preserving them when their fathers and mothers in the flesh have forsaken them, from the cradle to the last period of their existence,—enduring with all long suffering and forbearance their manifold provocations,—or by sending His timely chastisements to recal them to the path of duty,—when we consider these numberless kind, and parental acts, can we refrain from exclaiming in the language of Isaiah "thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us; thou! O Lord, art our Father, and thy name is from everlasting."

But we are assured in the holy Scriptures, that God is in a more especial manner "the Father of good men." As dutiful children experience, for the most part, the greatest portion of their parents' affection, so do good men receive the peculiar favor of the uni-

versal parent. They who endeavour "to be holy, even as God is holy," enjoy a more intimate relationship with Him, are truly sons of God, and the offspring of the most High. Remember, my brethren, the paternal expressions, by which He assures such of his love, and your hearts must overflow with affection towards Him. "Come out, and touch not the unholy thing," saith the Lord, "and ye shall be my sons and my daughters." "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." And under the following expressive image has God declared the strength of his affection towards his earthly offspring.—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?—Yea she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Even when the Almighty corrects his children, it is with the chastisement of a tender Father on a Son, in whom he delighteth—his visitation is not administered in anger, but, for the purposes of reclamation and amendment. In this gracious light it is that God has been pleased to reveal himself, in order that we may entertain "that perfect love which casteth out fear."

As we advance farther in the application of the term, we shall find more lovely displays of this parental connexion, and consequently more reasons to declare with ardor and sincerity—"I believe in God, the Father."—Under the Christian dispensation, for instance, the Almighty is truly our Father, without

the least reference to the rigor and awfulness annexed to the titles of Lord, and Master. Immediately after His resurrection, our Saviour speaks of his disciples, as of brethren, and so calls them in his first most gracious message.—“Go unto my brethren,” says he, “and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father,—to my God and your God.” Oh that these terms of love and condescension were more deeply imprinted upon our hearts! Behold the adorable Son of God calling us brethren! Not ashamed, as the Apostle well observes, “to call us” by that honourable distinction, so that we may exultingly say with that same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, “that we are no longer servants, but sons.”

Nor is the title of sons merely nominal—for we enjoy all the privileges, which such an elevation implies. We are made the children of God by adoption, admitted into the family of God by baptism, have, afterwards, the liberty of approaching Him, of calling upon, of communicating with Him—and of applying all the blessings and benefits, which such a connexion administers to the furtherance of our everlasting happiness. Of all these merciful and essential privileges, we are assured by the Apostles of Christ,—by those godly men, “who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” who were called to preach the “glad tidings” of this sonship with mankind, and who sealed the truth of their

ministry with their blood. "Ye are the sons of God," writes St. Paul, "by faith in Jesus Christ." "Whoso did receive Him," says St. John, "to them he gave the power to become the sons of God."—"And, behold," declares the same evangelist, "what manner of love the Father hath given us, that we should be called the sons of God, and receive the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father."

We may again, properly call God "our Father," because we are his children by regeneration. That "new birth," which is spoken of in the Gospel, adds to our connexion with the Almighty, as sons, and is a very gracious act of his fatherly affection.—For, as Christ assures us, "that whosoever is not born from above, cannot see the kingdom of God—and, that whosoever is begotten of God does not sin,"—so we cannot imagine a more affectionate instance of our heavenly parents' regard, than that of working in us, by his grace, the principles of christianity, and creating us again according to His image in righteousness and true holiness."

In one more instance may the propriety be established of believing in, and calling God, "our Father," as our Creed requires, and that is, by our resurrection from the grave. For the state and condition of our souls must undergo such a change and alteration before we enter the presence of God, that we may, very properly be said to be "regene-

rated and born again." "Behold, says the Apostle, in his solemn chapter to the Corinthians, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." As "Flesh and blood," cannot see God, out of His infinite mercy, that heavenly Parent who first created and formed us for the present world, will, in due time, unless we resist his grace, quicken us, and endue us with proper qualities and faculties, for the next life. Corrupted and depraved as we are, we cannot now resemble the Father, "whom, when he appeareth," we are told, "we shall be like." "Now we bear the image of the earthy," but, by that new Birth, "we shall bear the image of the heavenly." For we are assured by one of the most eminent servants of Christ, "that if we are accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, we shall be the sons of God, being the sons of the resurrection; and if sons, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, receiving the reward and the promise of eternal inheritance." "Blessed," therefore, we may truly say, "blessed therefore, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to,

an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which fadeth not away, but is reserved for us, eternal in the heavens."

In these several senses, my brethren, is God, with great propriety styled "Father," in the Apostles' Creed. Collecting them now together, for the purpose of presenting them in a nearer view,—we shall find the Supreme Being is rightly the object of our faith and love, because He is the "Creator" of all things,—because He is the "Father" of all mankind,—because, in a more especial manner, He is the parent of "good men,"—because, under the "Christian dispensation" he is more particularly so, for we are permitted to style the only begotten Son of God our "elder brother,"—because we are "created again, according to the divine image in righteousness and true holiness," and, because we have the "sure and joyful hope" of a resurrection from the grave, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, therefore, as it respects ourselves, we may very properly profess the opening article in the creed, and say with the minister, "I believe in God the Father." But, there is another sense in which the term must be taken, and to which every true christian will conscientiously subscribe,—which is, "That God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and, as such, the first Person in the ever-blessed Trinity. This mysterious truth the Almighty was pleased to declare, by an oral testimony, at the

commencement of our Lord's ministry, when a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this doctrine our Saviour himself confirmed in that solemn address to God, which He made a short time previous to his death,—“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee.” And this point of Christian faith was received and acted upon by the apostles, who, as they were commanded, went out and preached the gospel, and baptized their converts in the name “of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Although we are unable to enter deeply into this sacred mystery, yet we may perceive from a divine revelation, some grounds of this relationship. The first is,—the temporal generation of Christ by the spirit and power of God. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,” said the angel to the Virgin Mary, “and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” We derive another authority for this doctrine from Saint Paul's sermon at Antioch, in which he says, “that God hath fulfilled the promise made unto our fathers, in that he hath raised up Jesus again,”—it is also written in the second Psalm, “thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.” To this restoration from death unto life, may be added Christ's appointment to sovereign authority

and power. "God," observes the apostle, "hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." But the last, and most eminent ground of his Sonship is, that eternal generation by which in the beginning God the Father did communicate his own divine essence to Christ Jesus. This Christian doctrine, though full of mystery, and surpassing our present capacities to understand, must be admitted and conscientiously believed, because the Almighty has been pleased to reveal it to us as an essential article of faith, If, my brethren, you will read with attention and humility, the seventeenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, and afterwards the first chapter of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, you will find a plain revelation of this mysterious truth; and, if it produces the consequence, which it should, it will illustrate the wonderful grace of God, in the gospel dispensation, strengthen and confirm your faith, and direct and animate your future devotions.

Much more might be advanced upon this important doctrine, by a reference to many other divine authorities,—but, having already said, what I humbly conceive to be of much importance, respecting this second article of the Apostles' Creed, and to justify your repeating with the minister "I believe in God, the Father,"—I proceed, before I conclude, to apply in an instance, or two, the preceding subject.

And first—as God is our "Father," and we are

permitted to address Him by that endearing name, we ought to make Him, the constant object of our attention. If our earthly parents require our ready obedience to their commands, ought not our heavenly Father, from whom we derive every good and perfect gift in this life, and to whom we look for glory and immortality in the next, to receive from us every possible return of honour and submission? As this is the most valuable connexion that can be formed, every other should be made subservient to it. If preserved properly, which can only be done by obeying as dutiful children, the precepts contained in the Gospel—we may henceforth claim the privilege “of Sons,” and be admitted in due time to the presence of the Almighty Father, with whom we shall dwell for ever and ever,—whereas, if we destroy that exalted connexion,—which we may do, by throwing off the restraints of religion, and by trampling under foot every thing serious and sacred,—we shall forfeit our relationship, and become the children of wrath, and sons of perdition.

Our blessed Lord solemnly assured the Jews, “that if they were the children of Abraham, they would do the works of Abraham.” And the spirit and force of this observation may be applied home to ourselves. We may justly argue, that if we are the sons of God, we shall do the works of God,—and, that if we love Him as a “Father,” we shall evidence the strength of our affection by our obedi-

ence to his commands. If, then, this be the only true—the only substantial proof of our affinity, how deeply does it concern us to know whether we are really, or, only nominally, the children of the most High! And this fact may be easily ascertained—some such questions as the following, applied closely to our consciences, will prove the validity of our claims. “Do I indulge myself in any of those things “which are forbidden in the Gospel? Am I envious, “proud, intemperate, covetuous, sensual, or revenge-“ful? Do I, as far as I am able, regularly and “devoutly perform my religious duties? Are my “prayers to the throne of grace, for light to see, and “for power to perform my solemn engagements with “my God, frequent and fervent? And under every “vicissitude of this painful life, do I disclaim all “help in myself, and place my whole hope and con-“fidence in the Lord.” If we really do desire to prove our unfeigned belief in God the Father, and not to be found “aliens” and “outcasts” at the great day of account, we must become thus conversant with our hearts,—“and if our hearts condemn us not,” then shall we have cause for everlasting joy.

If again this exalted connexion, between our God and ourselves, be properly preserved, it will have another most important influence on our conduct, namely—that as we and our fellow creatures have been made by one infinitely wise, and good, and all powerful Being, we shall behave towards our brethren as

inmates of one family, and as children of one universal parent. We are branches spreading from one common stem,—streams flowing from the same source of heavenly beneficence, and members of one body : and, always remembering this relationship, we shall exhibit our sense of it to the very meanest of Gods' creatures,—even the vilest worm, and the most insignificant insect will not be despised, and much less treated with cruelty, which, it can never deserve. Every creature that exists, is the work of God, and all things that breathe, are subjects of his care, and are objects of his concern; for to all, “the Lord is good, His tender mercies are over all his works.” And especially, in the strongest manner, are we bound, as fellow creatures, and above all, as fellow christians, to produce brotherly love. For we are sons of one Father—we have “one body,” “one spirit,” “one hope of our calling,” “one Lord,” “one faith,” “one baptism.”

Created, then, after the image of God, and, when that image was defaced by sin, begotten again, in Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, should we debase that image by unworthy actions? Should we, we who are the heirs of eternal life, forfeit our claims to immortal happiness, and sell our birth right for vain and criminal pursuits? We may now look upon the only begotten Son of the Almighty as our elder brother, and Angels, and Saints, and Martyrs, and all good men made perfect, we may regard as

our brethren in grace.—If, however, heedless of these privileges we forsake our heavenly Father, and cast in our lot with the wicked and rebellious, we shall forfeit for ever our glorious affinity, and exchange it for disinheritance and disgrace. We shall renounce,—and mark the degrading contrast!—We shall renounce the God of truth and mercy, and have for our “Parent,” Satan, that old Serpent—and father of lies. We shall have for our “elder brethren,” those ministers and fiends of darkness, who run to and fro upon the earth to do evil, and for our constant companions, we shall have all the malicious, all the tormenting spirits, who have ever existed, from the first creation of the world, to the unhappy moment of our final and everlasting destiny. From such misery God of his infinite mercy deliver us!

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD.

Genesis 17th, 1.—part.

“I am the Almighty God.”

IN my last discourse, I offered to your attention the grounds, on which the supreme Being is so properly styled our “Father,” in the Apostles’ Creed,—which are the following—first, as the creator of all things—secondly, as the parent of all mankind—thirdly, as the Father of all good men—fourthly, as more particularly so, under the christian dispensation, from his working in us, by his grace, what is well pleasing in his sight,—and, lastly, by our resurrection from the grave, through the efficacious sacrifice, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Having shewn the relationship in these particular instances, and having observed, that many others might be produced by a reference to the divine authorities, as, for example, to God, as the Father of the promised Messiah—I proceeded to submit to your serious consideration the two natural consequences, which the belief in God the Father should

produce—namely, that we should love Him with all our heart, and with all our soul, which could only be done by paying a proper obedience to his sacred laws, and by cultivating a brotherly affection for all our fellow creatures.

We now advance to the consideration of another part of his awful character, which is justly made the object of our faith—his omnipotence, or infinite power—"I believe in God the Father Almighty." This sacred truth we are taught by the word of God Himself, and which was declared upon the following occasions. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, the Lord appeared unto Abraham and addressed him in these gracious terms. "I am the Almighty God—walk before me "and be perfect—and I will make my covenant "between me and thee,—and will multiply thee "exceedingly." The nature of this promise, we perceive, clearly indicated the exertion of supernatural power,—because, at the time it was given, both Abraham and Sarah were well stricken in years, and it could not be accomplished in the ordinary course of human affairs. It came to pass, however, as the mighty God had spoken.—At the prescribed time Sarah did bear Abraham a son in his and her old age—who became the Father of many nations—and whose seed was multiplied "as the stars in heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore," thereby confirming that no act was beyond the power of his

operation, and that with God—all things are possible.

The object now before us is to illustrate this divine attribute,—in order, that we may see in what sense, it is used in the Apostles' Creed, and with what propriety is added to "God the Father." It may be however, expedient to observe previously, that, although God is styled Almighty, this attribute is not to be ascribed to him exclusively of the other Persons in the Godhead, because all the divine perfections belong equally to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,—but by the way of eminence, as to the first Person in the divine nature. And a similar distinction is to be observed in the operations of the divine will. For notwithstanding they proceed from all the three Persons, in the Godhead, yet, in holy scripture, some are appropriated to one, and some to another. "Creation and preservation," for instance, are attributed to God the Father—"reconciliation and redemption," to God the Son,—and—"illumination and sanctification" to God the Holy Ghost. We must remember therefore, that God the Father, is called eminently, but not exclusively, Almighty in the Creed—and that He is only thus spoken of, as the first Person in the ever blessed Trinity.

From this prefatory remark, we will proceed to consider the meaning of the term Almighty, by collecting the sense, which the word bears in the original. Now, as we find from Bishop Pearson, on this article

of the head, it answers to two celebrated names usually applied to God in the old Testament, one of which is "Sabaoth," which denotes that rule and dominion, which the supreme Being has over all things;—and the other is "Shaddai," which implies the strength, force, and power, by which God performs whatsoever he willeth. The appellation of Sabaoth, Lord, or God of Hosts, frequently occurs in holy writ, and repeatedly in the 50th chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, and particularly at the 34th verse—"the Redeemer is strong,—the Lord of Hosts is his name;"—and the other term Shaddai, self-sufficient, or omnipotent, is to be found generally in the book of Job. From the original sense of the term Almighty, we ascertain then its proper import, and when we address Him in the creed, by that distinction, we ascribe to Him uncontrolled dominion and government,—we acknowledge his power to be infinite and independent, without exception, without limitation,—and everlasting, without termination, or conclusion,—and thus, "we believe in God, the Father Almighty."—

As such is the primary sense of the term Almighty, let us next proceed to observe, on what reasons and grounds, we believe Him to be an Almighty Being.—And the first that I shall offer is this—because He is the Maker and Governor of the world, and, therefore, has a right to rule over us. If, among ourselves, he, who is most able to govern and

provide for the common good,—if excellency of nature be a foundation of authority, as we know it was when power was first delegated to an Individual,—then, my brethren, how reasonably, how absolutely must God become possessed of the right to govern, who surpasses every thing in wisdom, in goodness, and in power?

Our blessed Lord tells us that no “one is good, save one, that is God.” Saint Paul assures us, that “God only is wise.” And the inspired Psalmist, that “power alone belongeth unto God.” God is wise, and, therefore, able to perceive what will most conduce to his creatures’ happiness,—God is good, and, therefore, willing to promote their happiness,—and God is powerful, and, therefore, strong enough to remove every obstacle that may oppose his purpose. Well, then, may we exclaim with David, “who is there among the Gods that shall be compared unto the Lord! O Lord, thou art our rightful Sovereign,—worthy to receive glory—honour—power, and dominion:—for thou hast made all things,—and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

We may easily believe, in the second place, God to be “the Father Almighty” from those impressive instances of his omnipotence displayed in the creation, and government of the world. Were we to confine our observations to such proofs only, as the bare light of nature can afford, we should nevertheless

trace, to the satisfaction of every intelligent and unbiassed mind, the existence of that divine attribute, in the construction, preservation, and disposition of the earth which we inhabit. But, if we receive and make use of the glorious light which Revelation supplies, we perceive the most astonishing, tremendous and supernatural instances of divine power. In the records of sacred truth, we are invariably assured that Jehovah is able to do, with the greatest facility, whatsoever pleaseth Him. The gracious promise made to Abraham of having a son, when in the course of nature such a circumstance could not take place, and which was fulfilled at the appointed time, proves that no act is too hard for the Almighty to execute, and that nothing is impossible with God."

Indeed, by referring to the Bible, we shall find this awful truth sufficiently established in many more instances, than the time would allow me to enumerate. It is recorded that "the Almighty cast "the chariots and hosts of Pharaoh into the sea,— "and with his right hand dashed in pieces the "enemy. With the blast of his nostrils the waters "were gathered together—the floods stood upright "as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the "heart of the sea." It was the Almighty, who, by his instrument, Moses, "made streams of water to "flow from hard and flinty rocks, and conducted his faithful servants unhurt through a raging furnace.

“To the blind he has given sight,—to the afflicted “health, and life to the dead.” Each of these acts of supreme power was wrought by the very least exertion of this glorious attribute. That, my brethren which we could not effectuate, were our strength increased beyond all calculation, and our lives prolonged to an immensurable period, the Lord God Almighty performed without an effort,—as it were by a thought, a look, a word—a touch. Justly, therefore, might the penman exclaim, “he overturned “mountains in his anger—and shook the earth out “of its place.—He looked on the earth and it “trembled.—He touched the hills and they smoked. By the word of the Lord the Heavens were made. By the word of his power he upholdeth all things. When he hideth his face from them they are troubled—when he withholdeth his breath they die, and turn again to their dust.” Surely, that supreme Being, who inherently possesses such omnipotence, and such uncontrolled dominion, may be justly called “Almighty,” and we may safely and confidently receive that doctrine among the articles of our christian faith.

A third reason for ascribing to God the sovereign power, is, because He actually has executed, and continues still to execute the dominion that he possesses. Among the numberless instances which might be selected, the following will prove that the Deity has manifested his omnipotence by many

miraculous interpositions. In the universal deluge, by which he destroyed the inhabitants of the old world,—in his commanding the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon to rest in the valley of Ajalon—and in the unexpected judgment of Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, are seen most striking instances of the divine power;—and, if to these acts we add the exertion of this attribute to those princes, who called themselves Gods, in the reign of the good king Hezekiah, who considered themselves as lords of the earth—and who behaved themselves as having no superior,—we shall have sufficient evidence of this feature of the Godhead in the government of the world. “It came to pass that night,” records the sacred volume, with unexampled simplicity—“that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred, four score and five thousand, and when the children of Israel arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.”

These instances fully shew, that the Almighty has exercised his right of dominion by many miraculous interpositions, and, that he continues still to do so is evident from one very impressive proof which I purposely select from the many that might be adduced,—because it is very nigh unto us—in our mouths—and in our hearts that we may see it. I allude, my brethren, to the predicted dispersion

and supernatural preservation of a people, whose eventful history is, as striking an instance of God's omnipotence, as it is, of his goodness and protecting providence.

The Jews, we know, were God's peculiar people, and chosen for the accomplishment of the greatest act of mercy that was ever conferred on the fallen race of Adam, namely—in the fullness of time, to introduce a Saviour upon the earth;—and, by their existing in every part of the known world, in the midst of, though distinct from other nations,—to be living evidences of the truth of the gospel of Christ, and in short, to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles.”

Sacred prophecy had long foretold the coming of the Messiah, and had declared, at a period when that people were in the plenitude of their glory and wealth, that a time would come, “when they would be many days without a king, without a prince, a sacrifice—an ephod and a teraphim: and that afterward, the children of Israel would return, and seek the Lord, and should fear his goodness in the latter days.” That part of this prediction, which relates to their dispersion has been, we know, and see, minutely accomplished; and, my brethren, judging of the future from what has occurred, we have all reason to believe, that God's almighty hand will, in due time, bring to pass, all that he has predicted concerning, to use the language of Isaiah,

“that scattered and peeled nation.” We behold them, living monuments of divine wrath, moving to and fro upon the face of the earth. In one view we behold them harrassed, persecuted, and despised,—in another, wonderfully preserved, and surviving little less than exterminating oppressions. We see them apparently without an earthly friend and protector,—and yet, there is a secret power, there is an invisible hand shielding from destruction their forlorn and wretched race,—and causing every reflecting mind to feel and acknowledge—“that this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

We have a fourth reason to believe God the Father to be Almighty,—because, He is the real possessor of all things.—Both scripture and reason confirm this sacred truth.—“Behold,” said Moses to the children of Israel—the Heaven, and the Heaven of heavens is the Lord’s thy God.—The earth also, with all that is therein, for He hath founded it upon the floods.” Satisfied with this authority of scripture, let us see how the plain deductions of reason will assist us to establish this point. The potter applies to what use he pleases, the vessels, which he forms from his kneaded clay, “one to honour, and another to dishonour,” and they do not, they cannot reproach the hand that makes them. Has not then, the supreme Being an uncontrolled power over man,—man, whom he fashioned also out of clay, without any assistance, any help, by his uncommunicated

and independent wisdom and irresistible command? Reason, therefore, as well as divine Revelation, leads us to exclaim "thine, O Lord, is the power and the glory"—and to say with the King of Salem, "blessed be the most high God—the possessor of heaven and earth."

Another very convincing reason for believing God to be Almighty is drawn from his containing all things by his presence.—To us, my brethren, this lower world may seem vast and immeasurable:—but what is it, compared with the numberless worlds that move in the space around us, which we could never calculate, were the utmost comprehension given to our present powers. To all the various orders of creation throughout the universe—from the greatest to the least,—from the highest angels to the lowest reptile—God's government extends. It was this consideration, which excited the Psalmist to enquire "whither, O God, shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there,—if I go down to Hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea—even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me"

The last ground, which our limited time will allow me to mention, on which omnipotence may be ascribed to the supreme Being—is, because he sustains and preserves all things. God's preserving

care is manifest, in the most important scenes of life. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground," says Christ, "nor a hair from the head is unnumbered." How feeble is the exertion of this property in man, however wide his sphere of action may be, compared to its effects in the preservation of the universe! Contemplating the harmony of that system of which our own globe forms so small a part, we are well aware what dreadful consequences would follow, were the overruling power that defines and limits the course each orb pursues, for a moment to be suspended, or withdrawn. The elements too, which, controlled by the arm of omnipotence, produce all the comforts of life, would, in a state of disorder, frustrate the gracious purposes for which they were intended. The fountains of the deep, as in the general deluge, would overwhelm the earth with their waters.—The sun would parch and destroy us with its heat.—The Stars would fall from heaven,—and the air, which now contributes to the general benefit of mankind, impelled by an east wind, would produce the most destructive plagues. Whereas now, under divine control, and directed by the Almighty God, the clouds are wonderfully suspended. The sea is contained in bounds which it cannot pass—The sun, at a prescribed distance, illumines the earth and promotes its vegetation—The moon and the stars, guided by the same sovereign power invite exhausted

nature to repose, and the air, purified of noxious vapours, supplies and supports the purposes of animal life.—When we consider these mighty acts of sovereign, and Almighty power, shall we not say as the Levites said in the 9th. chapter of Nehemiah—“thou art God alone:—thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, and all their host, the earth and all things therein—the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all—and the host of heaven worshippeth the.”

Thus, my brethren, we perceive, in addition to God's own declaration, in the words of my text, that we have abundant reason to ascribe to Him omnipotence, and believe Him to be an “Almighty God.” We, therefore do rightly to call Him, in our hymns of praise, “All mighty and most merciful Father,” — “Holy — holy — holy — Lord, God Almighty,”—and to use many other similar expressions,—because, He is the Lord and Governor of all the world,—because, the light of nature and revelation exhibits the operations of his power, and manifests Him to be the proprietor of all things, and because He sustains by his presence, and preserves by his will, every object in creation.

As the knowledge of this sublime doctrine, without it produces a proper influence upon our conduct, will render us doubly criminal, I shall briefly point out, in conclusion, the effect that it should have upon our faith and practice.

In the first place,—as the Almighty is the Sovereign Lord of all things, consequently we are not our own masters, but are bound to render him obedience and submission, to reverence and adore his sacred Majesty,—and to conform to that holy gospel, which Jesus Christ has promulgated for the salvation of all mankind. As every sin is an act of rebellion against the King of heaven, we should be studious not to break his laws; and, as every murmur against the condition of life, in which Providence has placed us, implies a censure on his wisdom and goodness, we should be patient and resigned under all his dispensations. The God whom we obey is mild, gracious, and all powerful,—careful of our welfare, able to protect us in every time of need, or danger,—and ready, not only to accept, but to reward our willing, though imperfect services for the sake of Jesus Christ. “For justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and mercy and truth go before him.”

Since, again, the Almighty is a God of immense and uncontrollable power, how greatly should we fear to offend him! “Fear Him,” said Christ, “who hath power to cast both body and soul into Hell.”—“If,” as Job expresses it, “we had an arm like God’s, and could thunder with a voice like him,” we might, with less apprehension, venture to do things forbidden to be done. But, as we are but dust and ashes,—as by a look from Him, we may be

hurled into eternity, with all our unrepented crimes, who would dare to excite his indignation? Let us compare God's sovereign power with our feebleness and infirmity, and let the comparison depress our confidence, mortify our pride, and humble our self-will. Let it raise our faith, and animate our hope. Let it encourage us to the performance of every good work, so that we may secure his protection in this life, and approbation in the day of judgment.

As God is the proprietor of all things—as the clay cannot say to the potter, “why hast thou made me thus?” we must cheerfully submit to the divine will, and repine not under the sorest evils of life. Instead of wasting the short moments of our existence in vain and impious complaints, we should remember, that whatever our condition is, God can add to it many more afflictions—and that whatever blessings he has been pleased to bestow, we are only stewards of his bounty, and must render to Him finally a strict account. As God too, sustains every thing by his presence—how circumspectly, how reverently, how innocently, should we endeavour to pass the season of our sojourn here. God seeth not only our outward actions, but the very thoughts of our heart. No place, however distant—no retirement, however secret, can shield us from his penetration. “His eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good.” No thought should be, therefore,—cherished, no word be, therefore, uttered, which may reproach us in the

last day—no deed be done, which has not in view the glory of God and the happiness of our fellow creatures—“for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart.”

Once more.—As all things are preserved by the power of the Almighty, what reason have we to distrust, or to be over anxious for the occurrences of to-morrow, if we endeavour to live in the way of his commandments? God can, as we know he has done, furnish a table in the wilderness, and cause water to flow from the hard and flinty rock. His word has assured us, that he will never forsake those who love and fear him—his unbounded goodness inclines Him to fulfil that assurance, and his absolute power enables him amply to perform it. “Put therefore, my brethren, your trust in the Lord, and be doing good—and verily ye shall be fed.”

These effects on your faith and practice, the knowledge of the divine attribute we have now considered, should produce. “Beloved, as ye believe these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” Both, indeed, you must observe, in order to attain eternal life—for though without faith, it is impossible to please God,—yet, remember, that faith, without works, “is dead—being alone.” May God, therefore, give us a heart to love and dread him, and diligently to live after his commandments!

THE

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Nehemiah. 9th, 6th—partly.

“Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of Heavens, with all their Host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein.”

THE subject of my last discourse was an illustration of the omnipotency of the supreme Being, expressed under the term “Almighty.” The right of God the Father to that august title, appeared evident for the following reasons—as being the Lord and Governor of the world, whom, reason and scripture allow to be the proprietor of all creation, sustaining, at the same time, by his presence, and preserving by his power all things, whether in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.

We proceed now, to the last article in this portion of the Apostles’ Creed, which respects our belief in God the Father Almighty, and which, indeed, expresses an act so self-evident, that did we not know there were particular reasons for introducing it,

arising from some errors which prevailed in the early ages of the christian church, we might have considered it altogether unnecessary. "For whatsoever has an existence, is either made, or not made."—"Whatsoever," using the words of an Author whom I have before quoted, "is not God, is made—and whatsoever is not made, is God." From that uncreated and independent essence, must all created beings have proceeded, because the world, with all its symmetry of proportion, and compactness of parts, could no more have arisen by its own effort than this splendid edifice, in which we are now assembled, could have been erected without human assistance, and its various proportions so beautifully corresponding with each other, could have been arranged and united without man's labour and directing judgment.

The fact appears to have been this—about the year of our blessed Lord, two hundred and twenty-seven, a very dangerous error prevailed in the christian church. Many persons, at that time, ascribed the creation of the world to another God, inferior in worth and goodness to the supreme Being, who had been revealed in the Gospel. "Two principles exist"—as they asserted, "a good and an evil one.—The first, is a pure and subtle matter, which is light, and which does nothing but good—and the other is a gross and corrupt substance, which is called darkness, and which does nothing but evil."—Now, as the creation

of the world is that peculiarly august and admirable work, by which the existence of God is most strongly demonstrated—in which, his divine perfections are pre-eminently displayed,—and on which is founded all natural religion,—this article was very properly inserted into the Nicene, as well as into the Apostles' Creed, as a necessary object of our faith. In the latter we are instructed to believe in God “the maker of Heaven and earth,”—and in the former, which is repeated in the communion service, we are taught the same fact, with this further illustration of it, and, “of all things visible and invisible.” By acknowledging God to be the creator of all things, whether seen, or not seen, we characterize and distinguish Him from all the fictitious deities of the Heathen world, and declare with the Psalmist, “that all the Gods of the Heathen are but Idols, but it is the Lord who made the heavens.”

Our present subject is, indeed, most noble, animating, and instructive. It will illustrate an act of the supreme Being, which was celebrated, under the divine command, by the Jews, with great sabbatical festivity,—and, it will remind us of mercies, which are equally worthy the acknowledgment and praise of every devout christian.

In this confession of the Levites contained, in the words of my text, who were of the family or posterity of Levi, and were chosen by God, for the service of the Temple, out of the twelve tribes of Israel, we

have comprised the several particulars, which are implied under the article “of maker of heaven and earth.”—As they were crying to God for mercy, on a very solemn occasion, they exhorted the people to stand up, and to praise the Lord for ever and ever. “And they said, blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise—Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things therein, the seas, and all things therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”

Here, then, is distinctly specified, the subject of our present contemplation—And, in order, as I hope, to make it both instructive and interesting, I propose, with the divine blessing, to direct your attention to the three following particulars.—First—what is the object of our belief; secondly, some of the explanations of it, with which we are furnished in Holy writ;—and thirdly, what influence the knowledge and belief of this doctrine should produce on our future conduct.

First. Whenever you stand up, and join with the minister and the congregation, in acknowledging that God, “the Father Almighty, is the maker of heaven and earth”—you are supposed to believe, that the supreme Being formed all that superior region above us, with all its parts, properties, and inhabitants, whether, as the Nicene creed declares, they “be visible, or invisible;”—or, as St. Paul

expresses it, in his epistle to the Colossians you are supposed to believe that "He created all things, that are in heaven, and in the earth,—visible, and invisible whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things are created by Him and for Him,—and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

After this confession of God's being the maker of the invisible world, you are supposed to ascribe to the same Almighty power without restriction, or limitation, and according to the Mosaic account of it, the formation of the earth, and of the seas, and of all things therein. To this acknowledgment of God's all sufficiency, you are likewise expected to add your consent and belief, to these following points of doctrine, which, though not expressed, are plainly and rationally implied. First, that this world did not proceed from necessity,—but, that the supreme Being produced it, by a free and voluntary act of his own;—that—had his infinite wisdom seen fit, He could have abstained from making it, or have made it, in every respect different from what it is at present,—and, that whatever perfections, or properties, He has imparted, were imparted by choice, as absolute master of all things, and, that upon no account, was He indebted to any thing, either for its arrangement, or existence.

And to this doctrine we very properly subscribe, because, were it supposed, that the Almighty acted

from necessity in the creation of the world, his will would not have been concerned in the event, and consequently there would have been no justification, for rendering to Him our praise and acknowledgment.—But, as God's pleasure was the sole cause of his creating all things,—that pleasure must be the ground of our admiration and gratitude,—and should call forth the tribute of our praise,—or, as the elders express it in the Revelations of Saint John, we should confess, “thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory—and honour—and power—for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.”

Secondly. The next doctrine implied in this expression is, that God made the world without labour, or anxiety, or toil,—or, as one of the fathers of the church* has ably represented it—“his will, and his words, were the hands by which it was made.” “Let there be light,” said God, “and there was light.” Much as this sublime and animated sentence has been admired, it loses a great part of its force and beauty by translation. In the original it expresses every thing, which a finite Being can attribute to the wonder working power of God, and is one, among innumerable instances of the dignity and copiousness of expression, which is to be found in the first and most simple language of mankind.

* Tertulian.

Thirdly. Another doctrine, to which you are expected to give your assent, when you acknowledge God to be the “maker of heaven and earth,”—is,—that the creation of the world was owing to the natural benignity and munificence of the divine Being.—No possible benefit, no emolument, no accession of happiness, nor, any other advantage, could the all-creating God derive from our existence. Superlatively rich in all perfections, and imperturbably happy in the enjoyment of himself, He could receive no addition of pleasure, from the creation,—nor was it in the least necessary to the completion of any of his divine intentions. To his perfect benignity alone, we are to ascribe the being,—the beauty—the comfort that we trace in ourselves, and observe in every thing arround us—“the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, and his mercies are over all his works.”

Having, my brethren, pointed out the doctrines, which are either expressed, or implied, when you declare “your belief in God, the Father Almighty, the maker of Heaven and Earth”—I proceed, as I proposed, to remind you of some of the interesting illustrations, which are given of the existence and formation of the heaven of heavens, with all their Host—an engagement, indeed, most pleasing and important! For, as we are to exist for ever in another world, after our departure from this fleeting scene, which may be, even to night, or to-morrow,

but, inevitably, in a little more time,—it deeply interests us to know, and to remember, what the Holy scriptures have revealed respecting that blissful place. Confused and indeterminate our ideas of this future world must be; yet, that circumstance cannot destroy its existence, because the unerring word of God has repeatedly assured us, that there is another world. May his grace accompany our contemplation of the subject! May it enlighten our understandings!—may it enlarge our conceptions of the boundless power and ineffable goodness of God, and render us anxious to become members of that blessed kingdom, where there “will be no more death, neither sorrow—nor crying, nor pain!”

Whatever opinions are to be formed of the creation of heaven and its angelic Host, must, like the construction of the earth, be founded on the word of God. Of both these operations of the deity the Mosaic account treats, though more fully of the latter, than of the former. But, in the revelations of Saint John, we have recorded the most lively representations of that blissful place, in full and glowing language. By briefly uniting the two descriptions together, we shall see, in part, though, after all, but very imperfectly—for what a glorious kingdom we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

“In the beginning God created the Heaven!”
Summary as this account is of that celestial region

into which the faithful are to be admitted after death, yet we may collect from it this impressive truth, that the whole universe, was produced, although perhaps at different times, by the power and wisdom of the eternal God. As there is no necessity for knowing when the creation of the Heavens took place, it is no where revealed, —but, we know that they exist—that among them is the holy and dignified residence of the self-existent God, where thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of the most glorious beings wait upon Him to receive and execute his commands. Had we, my brethren, no other information of the materials, and the joys of heaven, than what we can collect from the following vision in the revelations of Saint John, dead to the powers of description must that soul be, on whom it should make no impression. “Come up hither, said a voice talking with the evangelist, “and I will shew thee things that must be hereafter.” And immediately I was in the spirit;— and behold, a throne was set in the heaven, and one sat on the throne—and He that sat was, to look upon, like a jasper and a sardine stone:—and there was a rainbow round the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne, were four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, with crowns of gold upon their heads—and out of the throne, proceeded lightnings, and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the

throne,—and before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto chrystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes before and behind. And they rest not day and night, saying holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power—for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

From this sublime and figurative account may every thing be imagined that can either excite our admiration, or promote a desire of becoming inmates of that splendid and blessed scene. There, my brethren, we may safely conclude, are the “rivers” of delight,—there are the “many mansions” which are prepared for such as love and serve God.

Were the heavens unfolded to our view, what an august, but soul inspiring spectacle might we behold! Perhaps, guided by the representations which the scriptures supply, we should see the first order of human beings, those “twelve Patriarchs,” sitting upon twelve thrones, who are appointed,—and prepared to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.—Not far from them we might contemplate that “noble army of martyrs,” who came out of great tribulations,

their robes washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb, serving God day and night! In respective degrees of happiness, also, apportioned to their conduct in this life, we might perceive, "in the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world," the "good and virtuous" of all nations, who were either guided by the light of nature,—for the sacrifice of Christ was retrospective—or, who were directed by the doctrines of the holy Gospel. Among them—"babes and sucklings," who were taken early from life.—Among them the poor, and the unlettered—whose minds were never instructed,—among them, those, who, in God's wisdom, were never blessed with reason, Idiots,—those, whose mental powers were impaired, or ruined by misery—or disease.—All members of that blissful scene—having been judged according to the rule—"where much is given, much is required," and ranged, in their beatitude, conformably to the strict justice and boundless mercy of "the maker of heaven and earth."

Stretched to the utmost powers of human imagination, let our ideas present to us every thing that is captivating, and immense, and glorious,—still, my brethren, we shall be able to comprehend but very little of the invisible world, which it was God's good pleasure to create, for it is written "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard—nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things, that God hath prepared for those who love Him." Of his

infinite mercy may He grant, that when our time comes, when our earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved,— we may enter the building of God,—“an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.”

Having now presented some of the most descriptive and impressive representations of a future world, I proceed to remind you of the account which Moses gives of the earth that we inhabit—of which, as it is a subject more fitted for us to know than the formation of the heavens, we have plainer revelations. “Six days,” we read, were appropriated to the completion of this stupendous work, which, according to the tradition of most nations, and to generally concurrent testimony, had its origin about four thousand years before Christ. As the matter of which the earth is formed, was shapeless, waste and surrounded with darkness,—“the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” actuated that dark and confused mass, and reduced its parts to the most beautiful proportion, and exquisite arrangement.

The first visible effect of the divine operations, we are told, was the production of light. On the second day, the element of air was created, that spacious expansion, in which birds fly, which is spread above, and around the earth, and which is called, in contradistinction to the waters of the sea, “the waters above the firmament.” A separation

between the earth and the waters was next made. On the third day, were the fluids of the chaos drained into spacious cavities prepared to receive them. The ocean sank into its channel, and the dry land appeared. Then the earth became one compact, firm and voluble globe, which, at the divine command, brought forth abundantly grass, herbs, trees, and plants, with their proper seeds, to continue a succession of their various kinds. On the fourth day, the sun and the moon were created, "to rule over the day and over the night."—"God made the stars also." On the fifth day, every kind of fish and every kind of fowl were created, and their Maker blessed them, in order that they might "increase and multiply," in the waters, and on the earth, which He prepared for their reception and support.

On the sixth day, God created all kinds of reptiles and beasts, and, last of all, the man and the woman. It would appear that a regular gradation was observed in the works of the creation, for God proceeded from the less noble to the more noble animals—from fishes to birds—from birds to beasts—from beasts, to the master-piece of the creation. Man, indeed, was God's "last and best work," exalted above all terrestrial creatures, by being made after the "image" and in the likeness of his Maker,—that is, principally, "in righteousness and true holiness." Though, alas! the nature of

man is considerably impaired by the fall, yet, corrupted as it is, we may easily perceive its vast superiority over every other earthly creature. If his body, like their's, is made of the same mean material, his mind is of an infinitely nobler extraction.—By that faculty he penetrates into subjects beyond the limits of mere wordly influence—and judges of, and admires the beauty and contrivance of the glorious fabric of the universe. By that faculty he conceives, though but negatively, eternity itself—stretches his ideas to the very highest excellency, and contemplates the Being and attributes of an Almighty and infinitely perfect God. Ought not these considerations to dispose us to be pleased with our existence, and grateful to its blessed author! Ought we not always to remember, that we have an immortal soul, and endeavour, by a conformity of heart and life to the precepts of the gospel, to prepare ourselves for a much higher and more perfect—an everlasting being, in the world that is to come!

Such, is the Mosaic, and the only authentic account of the formation of the world, and it is very properly made an article of our “Belief,” and ought also to be the frequent subject of our meditations. And for these express purposes, namely—for attaining the knowledge of God and of his blessed Son Jesus Christ, and for our being confirmed in love and obedience to Him, a day was set apart for its solemn

observance—the Sabbath and Man, were, in some degree, created together—for as soon as God had formed the world and the man in it, “he blessed the seventh day, and rested upon it,” and distinguished it from the other six, by devoting it to the worship of Himself, the great and gracious creator of Heaven and Earth. No doubt our first parents religiously regarded the solemn ordinance ;—and, that men also in the most early ages of the world observed it, we may collect from the practice of reckoning their time by weeks ;—that the children of Israel remembered the sabbath, we are assured by Moses, and the later prophets ;—and that the disciples of Christ, and their immediate converts did the same is also certain from the institution of the first day of the week—the christian sabbath.—And surely no considerate,—or grateful person can willingly profane a day divinely appointed, and dedicated to the noblest and most sublime service in which a human being can be engaged. No one can deem it, what pretence soever, or call may arise short of absolute necessity, an infringement upon his time to spend the sabbath in contemplating the attributes of the Godhead,—in learning his duty,—in preparing his soul for a better world,—and in joining the congregation in praying to, and praising “the Maker of Heaven and Earth.” There is, indeed, no one object to which the subject before us has referred, which does not call imperatively upon every individual—to come into the Lord’s

courts with gladness, and to give him the honour due unto his name."

You should praise God, then, my brethren for the creation of that glorious world, of which, through Jesus Christ, you are an inheritor, and for those Beings, who watch over you and preserve you, upon earth. You should praise God for his excellent greatness—for the formation of the atmosphere, which, at a proper distance, prevents the waters above and below from uniting and destroying your existence. You should praise God, for the multitude of blessings which the earth affords, and the ocean produces; for all the advantages that you derive from the light and heat of the sun and moon—from the dews and showers—from summer and winter. In short, the tribute of your warmest praise should be presented to Him, on his own day, for your creation with an understanding soul,—for present comforts—for prevention from evil,—for all the known and undeserved mercies bestowed upon you,—for the graces of his holy spirit,—and—"above all—for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, and for the hope of glory."

If, my brethren, you can prevail upon yourselves to consider seriously these strong and ever existing motives for praise and thanksgiving, you will readily acknowledge the wisdom of God, for devoting one day in seven to His service,—the piety of the Legislature for directing its observance—and the benefits

that you may receive from hearing the word of God explained, and pressed, through divine grace, we humbly hope, with efficacy upon your hearts and conscience.

Having now exhausted our usual portion of time, I shall conclude with submitting to your practice, two brief inferences from this article in the Apostles' Creed.

If, first, you sincerely believe God to be "the maker of heaven and earth," those lips, which make the confession, will be devoutly employed in chanting forth his goodness, and "declaring his wonders to the children of men." If those men are admired among us, who are remarkable for their talents, or acquirements, how ought the knowledge of God's unbounded attributes, as displayed in the creation of heaven and the earth, to excite our wonder, and command and fix our veneration and regard? Consider the mightiness of that power which raised, without an effort, this, and all the other worlds, around us. Reflect upon the infinitude of that wisdom, which could contrive, without labor, without assistance, such innumerable orders of creatures, and fit them all for purposes so necessary and so various. Remark, too, the unspeakable goodness, which formed man with such care and affection, which preserves him with such visible concern—and which, when he had forfeited all claim to mercy, because, reconciled to him, through the sufferings and death of his be-

loved Son! When we ponder on these marvellous loving kindnesses, can we refrain from exclaiming? "We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

And, lastly, if you seriously believe the Father Almighty to be the maker of Heaven and Earth, you will derive from that knowledge a sweet consolation and a sure support, which the world cannot give, or take away.—For, if we endeavour to deserve them, how can we distrust his protection and deliverance under the severest trials of our mortal life? He, who was able to create the heavens and the earth, and is willing to make his creatures happy, be assured, will never desert us in the darkest seasons of danger and temptation. Happy, then, are they,—happy are they, "who have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord—for their help cometh from the Lord—who hath made Heaven and Earth."

THE

AUTHENTICITY OF SCRIPTURE.

Romans 15th, and 4th.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.”

HAVING considered the first part of the Apostles' Creed, which relates to our belief “in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of Heaven and Earth,” we are arrived at the next article, which directs us to the object of a christian's faith, the second Person in the adorable Trinity, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So self-evident, indeed, is the existence of a first cause, that it is rightly called the religion of nature—and we may say, as the Apostle has said—“that they are without excuse,” who do not acknowledge the Being and existence of the supreme power.

But this cannot be so absolutely affirmed, at least, without due investigation, of that gracious Being, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

Whatever we collect concerning the relationship of Christ with God the Father, his union with the human nature, and the circumstances of his life, death, resurrection and ascension, must be procured from a divine revelation, and from that source alone, it must be proved whether we do rightly in believing the several particulars concerning Jesus Christ, which are contained in the Apostles' Creed.—If, therefore, for the present, I postpone the consideration of the subject, which is next in succession, that is, our belief in Jesus Christ, in order that I may more particularly direct your attention to the authority of the holy scriptures, in which, are related the mission—the divinity, and the earthly character of our blessed Redeemer, it will be perfectly consistent with the object that I have in view ;—namely, with the help of God, to supply such as may require it with weapons to combat, and defeat the adversaries of our religion, and be enabled “to give a reason of the hope that is in them.” And you, my brethren, who have hitherto attended these imperfect endeavours with a teachable mind, and a laudable desire to “become wise unto salvation,” which is the best of all motives, will perceive how very properly we derive, from the sacred oracles, the principles of our faith ;—whilst others, if such there be, who have been drawn hither by any influence less pure and praiseworthy, will be apprized that the contents of the Bible are not of human fabrication—but, are

given by "inspiration of God"—"and are profitable for doctrine—for reproof—for correction—for instructions in righteousness—that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

To this important subject the Apostle, in my text, very naturally leads our inquiries.—He tells us that, "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." In order, with the divine blessing, to confirm this hope, I proceed to explain—first, what we are to understand by the scriptures,—secondly, what necessity there was for a divine revelation,—and, lastly,—what reasons we have for believing them to be the writings of inspired men.

First. The sacred scriptures, on which we found our hope and consolation, are contained in the book, called the "Bible,"—and are a collection of sacred writings, which were composed at different times, "by men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Those Revelations from heaven, which were communicated before the birth of Christ, are distinguished by the appellation of the old testament—and those, after the birth of our Saviour, are denominated the new. The old testament was written in Hebrew, which was then the common language of the Jews, and was read to them publicly every sabbath day. And the writings of the new

testament, with, perhaps, the exception of the gospel of St. Matthew, though this is a disputed point, were composed in Greek, which was, at that time, the most known and cultivated language of the eastern world, and expressly for the purpose "that men might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, they might have life in his name."—And that the light of the holy scriptures might not be likened unto "a candle hidden under a bushel," the Bible was translated by godly men, into the language of the nations, in which, it was to be read. In England, it appears, that it was circulated in the Saxon language about seven hundred years after the christian æra. Some centuries after this period, when the Bible was deemed, by the intolerant and overweening power of the Romish church, a dangerous book, and locked up in an unknown tongue, all translations of the scriptures into the vulgar language were forbidden, in the western world, and many men and women were condemned, for reading the new testament in English, and delivered over to the rigor of unrighteous punishment. After this dark and deadly period the light of the glorious reformation rose. Liberty was then not only granted to people of all classes and of all ages, to derive their religious knowledge from the primitive and purest source,—but, the ministers of God were also diligent in admonishing their flocks to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly

digest them, that they through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”—Men, women, and children, were then invited to drink freely of those living fountains, which, when rightly tasted, will “prove a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Secondly. From this brief account of what the sacred scriptures are, we are naturally directed to the next particular to be considered, and which is, the absolute necessity there existed for that Revelation, which is contained in the Bible. Were we to confine our attention to one single circumstance to prove the necessity of a divine revelation,—namely—the insufficiency of all human reason to direct us in our notions of the Deity, and to point out a proper line of conduct by which to guide our lives,—that fact, would of itself decide the question;—but—if we add to the insufficiency of human reason, the consistency of such a revelation with the attributes of God,—all, I imagine, will be advanced, that is needful on this part of our subject.

Reason, then, in a state of innocence, and when the understanding was clear and strong, and the judgment yet unbiassed, was very different to what the powers and abilities of reason are, in the present corrupt condition of human nature. Of the former state, we are wholly incapable of judging, because, it can never be attained on this side the grave, but, of the latter, as it continues to exist, we can judge,

and may draw our unanswerable conclusions.

Consider then, my brethren, the very strange and opposite notions, that the most eminent philosophers entertained of those important doctrines, which christians know, so clearly, from revelation. They were strangers to the true account of the creation of the world, they were ignorant of the origin of mankind, and they had no knowledge of God's intercourse with men in the most early ages of their existence. Some of them maintained that the world was eternal,—and others, that it was formed by chance. They, who believed it to have had a beginning, knew not by what gradations, or, in what manner it was raised into its existing beauty and order,—and for want of that historical information, they yielded to opinions the most false and visionary. Many also of the most reflecting among them, were sensible of a great corruption in their nature, but, as they knew not by what means the primeval Pair lost their original perfection, they were consequently strangers to the cause, from which that corruption arose. And as they were ignorant of these principles of religion, the light which they derived from mere nature, could never have unfolded to them, that most important of all truths—namely, the gracious method, which infinite love adopted to effect a reconciliation between fallen man and his creator, and to exercise the goodness, without violating the justice of God. These momentous doctrines, wholly

depend upon Revelation, and which, as they did not fall within the compass of human reason, to attain, so the best and the wisest of men, could never have discovered them ;—and destitute of this knowledge, they must have remained, ignorant and perplexed, conscious of the power of sin, and uncertain, if not despairing, of its future forgiveness and remission.

Such was the insufficiency of human reason with respect to the first truths of nature and grace ;—and we shall find that the doctrines which the wisest among the Heathens inculcated, were as fallacious as the opinions, which they had formed, and were entirely subversive of the best interests and charities of life. For they asserted, that God was neither pleased, nor displeased with the conduct of mankind ;—they propagated the gloomy doctrine of irresistible fate, and that every action was the result of necessity, and not of choice,—thus destroying all the incitement occasioned by the distinction between vice and virtue, and leaving no place for the operation of rewards and punishments, either in this, or in any other state of existence. The very object, too, of their adoration, and the diversity of worship, which the heathen world displayed, are farther melancholy instances of the insuperable impediments that oppose the guidance of reason alone, in matters of religious interest. In one country the knee of reverence has bowed to an element, in another to a mere creature of the imagination. Here the incense

of sacrifice steamed to wood and stone, "the works of men's hands," and there to the shades of the dead. Now an altar rises, perhaps, to a voluptuous and sanguinary Deity, and now to "an unknown God." Surely these recorded facts are sufficient to prove, beyond the possibility of a doubt, the insignificance, the inefficacy of human reason, and the absurdity of opposing its feeble and fallacious influence against the inestimable advantages of the Revelation from on high." And surprized and deeply afflicted must be the heart of every person, who is zealous to promote the honor of God and the best interests of his fellow creatures, to know that there are men still to be found, who either reject, or pretend to reject, the light, which has been afforded to illumine our mental obscurity;—who do not bless God, through Jesus Christ, for those holy scriptures, which have been written and preserved "for our learning"—by which, Gentile darkness has been gradually dispersed, and a glorious path been opened, in which every earthly pilgrim may walk without stumbling, and "make his calling and election sure."

From this brief review, then, we can not fail to perceive the necessity of a divine revelation, and if we will farther consider this corroborating proposition, that it was consistent with the nature of the supreme Being to reveal himself, at some proper period, to his creatures, and to make known to them, as far was necessary, his attributes, and their

duty, no more, I apprehend need be said, on this division of the subject.

A God of unbounded mercy, for instance, could not, to speak after the manner of men, see human Beings, whom He had voluntarily created, remain in darkness and apprehension, and under spiritual wants, which they could not of themselves remove, without feeling for them some commiseration, and being desirous of affording them some relief.—An infinitely wise God, who created the world to express his goodness and display his glory—could not have suffered the only creatures, who were capable of perceiving the one, and of promoting the other, to have remained for ever, without a competent knowledge of his existence, whereby they might acknowledge that goodness, and adore that unrivalled glory;—nor is it reasonable to imagine, that a just God would have left mankind without a revelation. For if earthly governors take care, that their subjects shall know their will, and be made acquainted with their laws,—surely the sovereign judge of all the earth must and “will do right.”—He will observe, for instance, equal equity in his administration with the best of rulers.—He will not suffer his laws to remain unknown, or omit any necessary means to promote among his subjects the performance of their duty, and to prevent the violation of his commands;—and thus we conclude, that a divine revelation is not only necessary to human happiness,

but is, also, consistent with the nature and attributes of the Godhead.

Thirdly. In what this divine revelation consists, is to be collected from the books of the old and new Testament. The principal part of the former is contained in the five books of Moses, the names of which it is unnecessary to enumerate. These five books were secured in the Tabernacle, as a sacred deposit, where the ark of the covenant was placed, and were kept there, during the journey of the Hebrews through the wilderness, and for some time after their establishment at Jerusalem. As they were successively written, the other historical and prophetical books were also consigned to the same sanctuary. At the time, when the Temple of Solomon was reduced to ashes by Nebuchadnezzar, the original manuscripts of the Law and the Prophets were carried away to Babylon, where they continued during the captivity of the Jews. And when, in process of time, their temple was rebuilt, Ezra collected together all the sacred writings, and, assisted by the Holy Spirit, rejected such parts, as rested upon false pretensions, and preserved those, which were divine and authentic. Thus were the Books of the old Testament delivered to the reverend acceptance of posterity, and they received the approbation of Christ himself, and afterwards of his Apostles. And if, to this account of their origin and preservation, we add the four following reasons,

for believing them to be written by those, whose names they bear, we cannot entertain any rational doubt of their authenticity.—First, because they have been unanswerably received as such by Jews, by Heathens, and by Christians:—secondly, because, they have been spoken of, and referred to, without hesitation, by Christ and his Apostles:—thirdly, because they record the most unfavorable predictions, respecting the Jews themselves, by whom they were tenaciously preserved,—many of which predictions have most minutely come to pass:—and, lastly, because, without including the blessing of the christian revelation, they contain precepts of unparalleled excellence, unsullied purity, and universal advantage.

From the writings of the old Testament, I now proceed to the consideration of those of the new,—which will be found to supply additional testimonies of the integrity and genuineness of the former—for they are, in a very great degree, a confirmation and completion of the prophecies, that are there predicted.—One very principal reason for believing the four Gospels, which contain the history of Jesus Christ, to be genuine, is, because they were published near the time, in which our Lord is said to have lived. The writers of the age, immediately following the Christian æra, have expressly mentioned them by name, and have cited many passages from their contents, which they evidently could

not have done, had not the four Gospels been written at the time, they are said to have been. So eagerly, indeed, were those writings sought after,—that translations of them were early made into various languages, some of which are still remaining, and copies were so widely circulated, that they came into the possession both of the friends and adversaries of the christian cause.

Now, as the four Gospels, were written so near the time in which our Saviour lived, had they contained a false history, the fraud would soon have been discovered and exposed, because the great transactions of His life were of the most public nature. His miracles were performed openly, frequently before crouds of people, oftentimes in the principal towns of Judea, and even in the very temple itself, and were, therefore, under the strict observation and jealous scrutiny of the chief Priests, and rulers of the Jews.—They were, also, acknowledged by persons of all ranks, and every sect,—nay, even by his most avowed and inveterate enemies, who confessed to each other, “that the man did many miracles.” On one occasion, “five thousand” of the people, and, on another, “four thousand” of them were miraculously fed, many of whom must have been alive, when the Gospels first appeared. Their divine author was tried by the supreme council of the Jews,—examined by the tetrarch of Galilee, and his officers, condemned by

the Roman governor, crucified close to the metropolis, at the very time of the great religious ceremony of the Jews, and before all the people, who were assembled together from different quarters of the country to worship. If these, and many other similar particulars, had been fictitious, the inhabitants of Judea would every where have disclosed the falsehood and have suppressed, at once, the christian religion,—that religion upon which most of them looked with abhorrence, and which many of them regarded as an impious schism, and directly opposite to the institutions of Moses:—and that they did not do so, is not only a most convincing, but an irresistible evidence in favor of the authenticity of the new Testament.

The credibility of the Gospel history, however, does not rest solely upon the testimony, strong as it is, of christian writers—but is also established by the concurrence of various Heathen and Jewish evidence. The names of the many authors by whom it has been referred to, it is scarcely necessary to produce especially as they are very commonly known. The most malignant and inveterate of them could not refute the existence of the transactions, which the Gospels record, and which were so generally published and acknowledged to be true. In short, as a very eminent defender of the religion of Jesus has well observed, “there is no history in the world

more certain, than that of the Evangelists, which is supported by the concurrent testimony of so many men, and so many nations, divided, indeed, among themselves, in other particulars, but all agreed in acknowledging the truth of the matters contained in the Gospels."

Another very strong proof of their credibility may be drawn from this circumstance—namely—that, at the present time, the principal parts recorded in them are perpetuated in every christian country. When I know, my brethren, that two sacraments are constantly administered, in the former of which, is preserved the remembrance of our Lord's commission of "baptizing converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and in the latter, is perpetuated the "memorial of Christ's death, until his coming again," I conclude, with the strongest conviction upon my mind, that they were, what they pretend to be, "ordained by Christ Himself." I conclude, that if the divine Author of the Gospels had neither lived—nor taught—nor performed miracles—nor died—nor rose again from the dead,—so many men of rank and talent, in countries so far distant from each other, and so populous, would never have combined together to perpetuate such gross deception, and to commemorate Institutions founded upon so vile and palpable an imposture.

The truth of the Gospels is, again, in the highest

degree credible, from a consideration of the characters of the Evangelists either as writers, or as men. They have related things, which they either saw, or heard, or performed. In such a case, they could not have been deceived themselves in the events that they record—and what possible reason could they have to impose upon the credulity of others? Was the object that they had in view the attainment of power, of riches, or of honor? The very contrary was the fact, for, by opposing every existing religion, by insisting on a renunciation of every other mode of worship, they made all the world their enemies. They suffered every species of destitution, poverty, hunger, nakedness and want. Instead of trust and power, they experienced the most bitter persecutions, and the infliction of death in every studied and terrific form. And what is, if possible, a still more striking proof of their integrity,—they well knew what they were to suffer, for their blessed Master had foretold them, what trials they were of necessity to endure. Collect then, these facts together—consider and determine, whether you think it possible for a number of men, in the full possession of their senses, with the certain loss of all that is dear in life, and with the constant peril of death before their eyes, to propagate what they, and others knew to be a falsehood, and to perish in its support?

To these strong and convincing reasons I shall, lastly, add the speedy and wonderful propagation

of the Gospel, which they preached,—after which I think, no other evidence can be wanting to prove that the new testament is of divine authority.

After the death of Christ, who confined His preaching to the House of Israel, the Apostles were commanded to testify what they had “seen and heard” “to the uttermost parts of the Earth.” Strange and impracticable as this design must have then appeared, yet, it was actually accomplished. Destitute of every human aid,—assisted by no art,—recommended by no reputation of its author,—enforced by no eloquence of its artless and illiterate advocates,—yet did twelve poor men triumph over the fiercest and most systematic opposition. The tyranny of the Magistrate,—the subtlety of the Philosopher,—the prejudices of the Gentiles,—the inbred bigotry of the Jews,—all yielded to the power by “which the word of God grew, and so mightily prevailed,” and in less than forty years the glad tidings of the gospel penetrated to the remotest parts of the known world. What can account for such surprising success? No other reason than this, that “He that was in them, was greater than He who was in the world,—and God chose the weak things of the world, to confound the things that were mighty.”

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to collect and compress within the limits of one discourse, many of the reasons, which you have to believe the

holy writings contained in your Bible to be a divine revelation. As the remainder of my subject, must, necessarily, be short—I shall address myself to every one of you, as if I were putting into your hands that holy volume, of which we have been discoursing.

Take, then, I would say this Bible—which contains a most important message from your God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth—and the future judge of quick and dead. Receive the oracles it contains, which were delivered from the Almighty, first by the Prophets, and afterwards by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Regard them with the warmest affection, and the devoutest reverence. Defend them against all, who shall make them the subject of their sport and ridicule. Consider them as the rule by which your future and eternal happiness, will be estimated,—as a treasure—from which you may draw pearls of the greatest price. “They were written for your learning—that through patience and comfort you might have hope.” Read them frequently, and with sincerity—and implore the grace of God, without which nothing can prosper, to enable you to fulfil the duties they prescribe. Do these things from principle—and your Bible shall be a blessed instrument to direct you through this earthly scene,—which if it be a vale of tears, is also one of mercy—to those blessed regions, where there is light—and life and happiness for ever more.

JESUS THE MESSIAH.

Acts 17th, 3—partly.

“ This Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”

As the apostles of our blessed Lord had to remove the prejudices of the Jews, to whom the glad tidings of Salvation were to be first offered, and upon their rejection, to the Gentiles,—and, also, to convince them, that Jesus was the promised Messiah—the most effectual method to accomplish the end in view,—was, to prove from the writings of the Jewish prophets, that the divine Person, “ whom they preached, had been predicted in the sacred scriptures by various names and under many representations. In their discourses to that stubborn and infatuated people, they frequently referred to the promise of a Redeemer to repair the injuries inflicted by the fall of our first parents,—they alluded to the different descriptions given of the Messiah, by their several prophets,—they pointed out how accu-

rately His character and their predictions agreed,—and then they appealed, in terms as forcible as language could supply,—whether Jesus was not that person—that Prince and Saviour, who was to give “repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

The words of my text were delivered on some similar occasion. It appears that after Saint Paul had been converted,—who was once, as zealous an opposer of our Lord, as any of his countrymen could be—“that he went about preaching the Gospel.” On his arrival at Thessalonica, the chief city of Macedonia, he entered into a synagogue of the Jews, and, “as his manner was, for three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures—opening—and alleging—that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom he preached unto them, is Christ.” His success, indeed, on the hearts of his hearers was various, and the impression made, most opposite in its effects,—for, “some believed—and others believed not,”—some were converted, others were enraged,—to some the word became “the savour of life unto life,”—to others it was the “savour of death unto death.” And it is probable, that such as withstood the calm and forcible appeal of the Apostle to his hearers would not have been persuaded—“though one had preached unto them from the dead.”

This was the method adopted by our great Apos-

tle to remove the prejudices of the Jews, and to propagate that holy religion, which, in due time, is “to cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” He proved that Jesus was the Christ from the scriptures.—He opened them, and alleged from them, that—Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.”

And as we are wholly indebted to revelation for the knowledge of that sacred truth, I humbly avail myself of Saint Paul’s example,—and may the same Being that directed him, and who can work by the weakest of his instruments accept and bless the endeavour to explain this article of our creed, through Jesus Christ !

Preparatory to this important subject, I deemed it conducive to the object in view, to remind you, in my last discourse, what we are to understand by the term Scriptures,—to explain the necessity there existed of a divine revelation, from the inefficacy and insufficiency of unassisted human nature in matters of religion—and I enumerated some of the many reasons, which we all have, to conclude, that our Bible contains the oracles of an all wise, all good, and everlasting God. We proceed now to the consideration of that most comfortable, and peculiar doctrine of our holy religion—the chief corner stone of our edifice of faith—namely—“that Jesus is the Christ”—the second Person in the ever blessed Trinity. For the know-

ledge of this sacred and fundamental doctrine we are wholly indebted to divine revelation, and the subject claims our most serious and profound attention. Without faith in the Son of God we cannot be saved, and "as faith cometh by hearing," the proofs of Christianity, submitted to your consideration, may be of the utmost advantage. The weak may be strengthened, the strong may be confirmed, and the unbeliever, perhaps, converted. Now you yourselves my brethren may judge of the deep importance of the present subject, from these scriptural assurances, not a "jot or tittle" of which will be permitted to fail—"Ye believe in God," said Christ to his Disciples, "believe also in ME." This is His commandment who sent him, "that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And Saint Peter decidedly proclaims "neither is their salvation in any other,—for there is none other name given among men, whereby we must be saved,"—and again—"it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear and receive that holy person shall be destroyed."

The first thing I shall offer to your present attention is the name, by which the Messiah was to be called.

Previous to his birth, we read that the angel of the Lord appeared unto his reputed father, and commanded that He should be called "Jesus"—which name, though not new in its application, was most

proper and significant, because, in its literal sense, it means Saviour. As Joshua was designed by Providence to bring the children of the Hebrews out of the wilderness, and conduct them to the promised land, that name was given to him, by divine appointment, to typify his being the Saviour of Israel,—Joshua and Jesus being the same in the original, though a little differently pronounced.—And Joshua actually did save the people from their enemies, leading them on, conquering and to conquer, till they took possession of the land of Canaan. And, as the Messiah was “to save his people from their sins,” teaching them, when He came in the flesh, and enabling them to overcome the worst of all enemies, their spiritual ones,—so, He was, at his birth, in the strictest sense called Jesus,—“being so named by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”

Secondly. From the name of the Son of God, we advance to the consideration of the title, which expresses his various offices—namely, “Christ.” And allow me to remind you here, that in your belief of that adorable Person, you must be cautious not to confound his office with his name, and imagine, that because Jesus—and Christ—are usually joined together, they are therefore similar to our christian and surnames, and mean no more. The Jews we know willingly acknowledged Him to be Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary—for they said,

“is not this the carpenter’s son?” “Is not his mother called Mary? and are not his brethren with us? but—they denied Him to be the Christ,—“for they had agreed together, that if any man confessed that he was the Christ, he should be put out of their synagogue,”—And this was, indeed, consistent with their conduct, for, had they acknowledged him to have been the promised Saviour, they would never have crucified him—and, consequently, would not have fulfilled the several predictions of their prophets.

You should remember, therefore, that the name of Christ denotes the offices of the Son of God; and has the same force, as the word Messiah, in the original, which signifies “anointed.” When affairs of the highest importance were to be performed—or, when particular persons were to be consecrated, and set apart for the most solemn offices, the ceremony of anointing was observed. Whatsoever was anointed in the law, was dedicated to some special use, or office.—We read, that Jacob poured oil on the top of a pillar, by which act the pillar was consecrated—and, that Moses anointed the tabernacle, and all the vials, and thereby dedicated them to God;—also, that Aaron and his sons were consecrated as priests by anointing, according to that law, in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus, which commanded that there should be an “holy anointing oil unto God throughout their generations.” In

succeeding periods, the ceremony became more sacred, and was confined to the High Priest—and to particular kings and prophets, who were designed for some extraordinary purpose. Before Saul, and David and Hazael—assumed the regal office, they were anointed. In the first and second books of Kings, it is recorded, that Elijah anointed Elisha to be a prophet in his room, and also in what manner Elisha, by the command of the Almighty, poured oil and anointed Jehu the son of Jehosaphat, king over Israel. Hence, therefore you will observe, that the name of Christ implied an office of especial dignity, and, when joined to that of Jesus, signified—that being anointed with the Holy Ghost—He was set apart, by the Almighty for—and advanced to those high offices which had been filled by men, who were types and shadows of the Messiah.

Thirdly. Such is the name, by which the Son of God was called, and such are the offices, which His title of Christ denotes. The next subject of our consideration is,—whether, or not, we do rightly in making Him the object of our faith. To prove this essential article of Christianity, we should remember, that such a Person was expected about the time, when Christ appeared, whom sacred prophecy had prefigured under three distinct characters,—namely, those of a “prophet,” a “king,” and a “priest.” Wherever we find the Messiah referred to in Scripture—we shall find Him represented as filling

those respective characters, either as instructing and informing mankind, who were far gone in sin and wickedness,—as establishing an universal and perpetual kingdom—or, as procuring the redemption and salvation of Israel. Assertions only, however, upon a subject of such deep importance, as the present, will not be sufficient. From holy writ we must clearly authenticate, that Jesus, the Christ, was foretold, and expected to fulfil each of those sacred functions. Permit me, therefore, to draw your attention to the following quotations, which, though they may appear numerous, it is indispensable to make,—and may they “become sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit,” and resisting to the overcoming of profaneness and infidelity!

One of the three characters in which the Messiah was to appear, was that of a Prophet, and no terms could more fully describe that sacred office, than the following, which were made choice of by the great legislator of the Jews, after a revelation from the Almighty.—“The Lord thy God,” said Moses, “will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me—unto him shall ye hearken, for I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”—This prediction evidently referred to a prophet, who,—in some distant period was to visit mankind, and like Moses, though

in a manner more excellent and more dignified, was to make known the will of God—to publish a new law, and to establish a new covenant with mankind.

The later prophets not only confine, but illustrate this prophetic assurance, as may be seen in the following passages of Isaiah, which Saint Luke applies to Jesus of Nazareth.—“ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach glad tidings unto the meek, and hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.”

In another quotation from the same prophet, by Saint Matthew, there are higher and more important purposes ascribed to the coming of the Messiah. “ Behold my servant whom I have chosen—mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him : He shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, nor quench the smoking flax.” In this prediction we clearly perceive some of the grand purposes of the mission of Christ—namely, that He was to discharge in a more eminent manner, than any other, every part of the prophetic office, to disclose new truths, to propagate the knowledge of the Most High, to enlighten the nations, “ which were in darkness, and under the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace.”

As this was one of the sacred characters, in which

the Son of God was to appear, we shall find, by attending to the few following passages from the New Testament—that they, who were but acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures, did unquestionably expect our Saviour in the character of a “Prophet.”—For it is recorded, that, about the time the Messiah appeared, “all the people mused in their hearts,” whether John were the person foretold. “Men,” writes the evangelist Saint John “seeing the miracles which Jesus did, said, this is in truth that Prophet which should come into the world.” Again, “fear came upon all the people,” writes Saint Luke,” and they glorified God, saying that a great Prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people.”—And the same general expectation is confirmed by the woman of Samaria, who replied to our Lord, “I know that the Messiah cometh, and that when He is come, He will tell us all things :”—from these quotations we satisfactorily determine that Jesus was announced to the world as a “Prophet,” and that the Jews did clearly expect Him to appear in that sacred character.

Now, my brethren, the second important office that the Messiah was to fill was that of a “Prince, or King”—who should govern mankind with justice—deliver them from the slavery of Satan—and subject all nations to the authority of his Father. This exalted function was thus described with great exultation by Isaiah, “Unto us a child is born—unto

us a Son is given—and the government shall be upon his shoulder—and his name shall be called Wonderful—Counsellor—the mighty God—the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end—upon the throne of David and his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever.” The same regal character is described by Jeremiah in the following terms—“Shout O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee,”—and, in another—“Behold the day is come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment, and justice upon the earth, and in his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely.” Another prophet, Ezekiel, has this assurance, and “I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David, meaning the Messiah, the true heir and successor of David, a Prince among them:”—and, in the book of Daniel, there occurs this remarkable prediction, “unto Him, was given dominion and glory and a kingdom—that all people and nations and languages should serve him—his dominion is an everlasting dominion—and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed.” Such are some of the sublime and explicit terms in which the glorious state and “Princely” character of the Messiah are described.

Now, if you will continue your attention, while I

present to you the few following passages, you will plainly perceive, that the Jews did actually expect Jesus to appear in this manner, according to their sacred writings. "Where is He, said the wise men, "who is born King of the Jews?" "Art thou the King of the Jews?" was the enquiry of Pilate to our Lord, before he condemned him to death. And it was from that popular and prevailing prepossession,—that, after Christ's resurrection, he was asked by his disciples, "whether he would, at that time, restore the Kingdom to Israel."—Thus, then, we perceive, that in this second character of "Prince, or King," the Son of God was foretold to appear; and that in this character also the Jews expected that He would appear.

I proceed now to consider the remaining office belonging to our blessed Lord, which is equally distinct, and of equal importance with the other two,—namely, that He was to execute the functions of "High Priest."

To this distinguished character the prophet Zechariah refers in the following sublime language—"Behold the man, whose name is the Branch; he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne;—and he shall be a priest upon his throne;—and the council of peace shall be between them both;"—that is, the kingdom and the priesthood be united in the same person, and there shall be no decision of interests between them. He was also

announced by the royal Psalmist "as a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." And the prophet Daniel declared it to be the Messiah's office "to bear the sins of many, and to make intercession for the transgressors"—the performance of which sacred duties belong particularly to the sacerdotal character.

As you have seen, in the two former instances, that the Jews expected the Messiah as a "Prophet and a king," you will no less clearly perceive, from the following passages of Scripture, that they generally looked for Him in the character of a "Priest." It is certain that the men of Jerusalem understood the 110th Psalm to respect the condition of the Messiah, from the manner, in which it is referred to by our blessed Lord, for, if it applied in the former part to Christ, where it is declared, "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand,"—it must also apply to him in the latter part, where it is said, "He is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Of the same import is the saying of the Samaritans. "We have heard him ourselves," said they, "and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world"—appropriating the title of Saviour to Christ's priesthood, by which office he was to expiate the sins of mankind, and to reconcile offenders to their insulted God. Hence we determine that the Messiah was predicted in the cha-

racter of a "Priest" also, and was expected by the Jews in that dignified and holy function.

And here, we may very naturally express our surprise at the strange inconsistency of that people, in rejecting the Messiah, after such unequivocal and well grounded expectations of his coming. Absurd, however, and infatuated as their conduct must appear, deeply aggravated is it by the two principal reasons, which they urge in their justification.—They, first, object to our Saviour's mean and humble appearance; so contrary to the unwarrantable notions that they had formed, desirous as they were to behold Him in the power and splendor of an Eastern Monarch, employed in the establishment of a temporal kingdom, and in the subjugation of their numerous enemies. But,—as the professed design of Christ's coming in the flesh, was to confer a blessing upon all mankind—the Redeemer could not have appeared in a character, so partial, consistently with his benign intentions. Had He descended, indeed, from heaven in that regal state, planting his throne in blood, and raising His people, from their abject condition, for the sole purpose of inflicting punishment on the adversaries of Israel—later ages would have justly deemed such an exertion of his prerogative, unworthy of the mercy of a Being, whose divine office was—"to bind up the broken hearted, to preach good tidings to the meek, and to set the captives free."

Nor is the other objection, that the Jews urge in their excuse, less absurd and indefensible.—For to this hour they would persuade us, that the coming of their Messiah is conditional, and that his appearance has been delayed by their existing transgressions.—What then, my brethren, were the iniquities of “that stubborn and rebellious nation” too great for the Lamb of God to pardon!—for Him to pardon,—whose avowed object was, to be a sacrifice for the transgressions of all mankind! Unquestionably not. For—as the express purpose of his coming “was to redeem Israel from all their sins” and to give light to them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death,”—so, their offences how numberless soever and enormous would rather have hastened, than have retarded his mission in the flesh,—

Thus, I have brought to your recollection the meaning of the name of Jesus, and have directed your attention to the threefold office, which was signified under the title of “Christ,” or “anointed.”—I have, also, shewn that the Son of God was predicted to appear in the triple character of a “Prophet”—“a King”—and a “Priest,”—and that the Jews did evidently expect Him, in those eminent and essential characters, about that very time, in which the day spring from on high arose.—To complete this portion of my subject, it is necessary that I should point out to you how distinctly and how exactly, our blessed Lord fulfilled these predictions

of the prophets, and this expectation of the Jews, who were preserved a peculiar people to introduce the Messiah into the world, at the appointed time ; but the consideration of a subject, at once so copious and so important, must be postponed to my next discourse, which, with the blessing of God, I hope will enable you to say, with full conviction, “ I believe in Jesus Christ.”

In conclusion allow me to observe, that the numerous quotations which you have heard, have not been taken from profane authorities, but from the sacred and everlasting word of God,—from a divine “ revelation,” mercifully vouchsafed to direct your conduct in this life, and to decide its reward, or punishment in that which is to come. Those scriptural authorities, on which the offices of the Messiah are established, are delivered to you pure and uncorrupted,—and, their holy truths have been authenticated by the blood of martyrs. Should they not accord, alas ! with your present views and opinions, too much reason is there, be assured, to apprehend, that—either the cares of the world, the suggestions of a carnal imagination, the conclusions of an ill-directed judgment, or, an inexcusable opposition to religious knowledge have misguided your mental power, and led you to behold these divine and momentous doctrines through a false and fatal medium. From such causes, and we deplore their existence, arise those melancholy divisions, those bitter hatreds, which

exist among many men, who profess themselves to be christians,—and who appear to study the writings of the Prophets, of the Evangelists, and the Apostles, not with humility, and a wish to acquire religious instruction, — but, to strengthen the unfavorable opinions which they have already formed,—and who, afterwards, reject every scriptural assurance, however plain and positive it may be, which is repugnant to the unsound principles that they have unhappily imbibed.

To prove, however, my brethren, that “you have not so learned Christ,”—that you have not neglected the “great salvation,” contained in your Bible—ask your hearts some such questions as these. In my belief and defence of the Gospel, am I divested of the bigotry of party—and, by behaving with candor and humility, do I shew to others, in what the pure religion of Christ consists? As it regards my faith, do I believe that Christ was the promised and expected Messiah?—Do I see in Him the great blessing of a Redeemer, who has made my peace with God,—who can, by his atonement, obtain my pardon for the past,—and enable me, by his Holy Spirit, to live in the favor of the Almighty for the time to come? As Christian love, if sincere, will work obedience, do I shew the sincerity of my love, by fulfilling his commands? Do I pray, in His name to my Father in heaven? In conformity to His divine example, do I submit patiently to the

afflictions that He sends? Do I believe in a judgment to come, when all men shall rise with their own bodies, to render an account of their works, when they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting—and they, that have done evil, and not repented of that evil, into everlasting fire?

These questions naturally arise from the subject, that we have now considered—and, as we can answer them satisfactorily, or not,—so shall we have cause to rejoice in, or to bewail the second coming of the Messiah. Saint Peter has assured us, that, “there is none other name, under heaven, by which we can be saved.” And the urgency of the subject compels me to repeat with all possible earnestness that these are the words of holy scripture—and that whether you believe them, or not—though heaven and earth should pass away, yet that they will never fail of their full and intire completion. If then, lastly, your faith in the Redeemer be now weak—if you are yielding to the suggestions of an unbelieving heart, be persuaded to pray frequently and fervently to God, in the name and for the sake of your Redeemer, that he will be pleased to kindle and to nourish in your heart a proper and unfeigned belief in Jesus Christ our Lord. And for your comfort, rely upon the fact, even as the word of God is true—that no one has prayed—for faith—for humility—for repentance,—or, for any other Christian grace, in sincerity of heart, and for the sake of

Christ—who ever prayed in vain. Make then but the trial—Lift up to the throne of divine mercy “ holy hands, without doubting ”—and you will soon obtain a firm and thorough confidence in the rock of your salvation. You will find your faith become strong enough to work “ obedience ;” and be enabled to make evidence of the integrity of your faith, by the purity of your life.

JESUS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

Acts 9th, 22d.—partly.

“ Proving that this is very Christ.”

THE words of my text record a part of the first public act of the ministry of Saint Paul. In the preceding verses we find, that the Apostle was commissioned with powers, from the High Priest, at Jerusalem, to go unto the synagogue at Damascus—and to bring back in bonds whomsoever he should find—“ whether they were men or women,” who had become converts to the religion of Jesus Christ. As he was proceeding on his eventful journey—“ a light,” exceeding the brightness of the sun, shone round about him, and struck him with instant blindness, and a voice from heaven called unto him, and said—“ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

At Damascus, whither he was conducted by those, who journeyed with him, he was visited by Ananias, through whose agency, under the divine

direction, his sight was restored, and the Holy Ghost conferred upon him. From that moment Saint Paul became a strenuous and successful advocate of the very cause, which he had before so violently opposed ;—for it is recorded, that immediately after his conversion, “ he preached Christ in the synagogues,” and “ confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.”

In my last discourse, the first particular that I endeavoured to explain and enforce, which relates to our belief in Jesus Christ, was the name, by which the Messiah was to be called—that is, Jesus, or Saviour of the world. Afterwards I proceeded to explain the particular meaning of the word Christ, which was a title given to express his offices, conveying the same significance as the word Messiah, and meaning anointed; and I concluded by proving, that, about the time our blessed Saviour appeared in the world, an extraordinary Person was expected by the Jews, upon the authority of their holy writings, in the threefold character of a “ Prophet”—“ a King” and “ a Priest.”—My present object is, with the blessing of God, to shew that He, in whom we profess to believe—Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour—was really and truly the very adorable person who fulfilled those three essential offices which were predicted of Him,—and, consequently, is the proper object of our faith and worship.—The subject, under consideration, as I endeavored to impress upon

you, in my last discourse, claims your most serious attention—for, it treats of the ever blessed Son of God,—from whom alone cometh our salvation. May the divine blessing accompany the discussion, and so powerfully influence our reason, as to cause us to exclaim with Simon Peter, and with equal sincerity and conviction—“ thou art the Christ the Son of the living God !”

And first. As the Messiah was predicted, and was expected to appear in the character of a “ Prophet,” let us inquire, whether he answered the prediction and expectation. To that purpose it will be necessary to remember, that there are two properties attached to the prophetic office, one of which is, the ability of explaining the attributes and the will of God to men—and the other is, the facility of foretelling future events. Now, did Jesus of Nazareth teach the doctrines, which revelation foretold he should teach? Did He publish a law, as Moses declared in the book of Deuteronomy he should publish? As Isaiah had predicted, did he send forth a religion from Sion, and the word of God from Jerusalem? Or, did he bring in, as Daniel had declared he should, in the last days, “ an everlasting righteousness and seal up the vision and prophecy?

To answer these introductory questions with the utmost satisfaction to every candid hearer, I need only refer you to the doctrines which Christ taught,

and to the precepts that he inculcated in his short and painful ministry. Go then, my brethren, with the multitude to that mountain whereon he delivered his first sublime lesson of instruction, and you will find such a system of happiness made known, as the wisest philosophers had in vain attempted to propose,—and, at which, his own countrymen were, with reason, astonished and confounded. Conquest—liberty—fame—riches—carnal pleasures, and all other objects of a similar nature, which were considered as the essence of all earthly felicity, were, by the divine lawgiver, rejected and condemned. Instead of aspiring after the honors—the pleasures, or the profits of a vain and transitory world—instead of demanding “an eye for an eye, or, a tooth for a tooth”—He—told them, “that blessed were they, who were pure in spirit”—“who were meek and lowly in heart”—“who hungered and thirsted after righteousness”—and who were “merciful,” and peacemakers,”—who, notwithstanding the sufferings and persecutions which they might sustain—in their earthly pilgrimage, continued firm and constant in the belief and practice of their christian faith, and in the exercise of a spirit of piety and virtue.

If you next follow our blessed Lord to the synagogue, you will frequently find him revealing with a plainness, and enforcing with an authority hitherto unknown, the most solemn truths, which concerned the eternal happiness of mankind. You will find,

for instance, in what manner his heavenly Father was to be worshipped:—and that was no longer after the superstitious forms of the Jews,—but, in heart and affection—in sincerity and truth. You will find him, also, proving what was before very obscurely revealed, namely, the existence of the soul in another state, and the nature of future rewards and punishments;—and you will hear Him establishing the new discipline and service of his church, in the appointment of his disciples, and in the institution of his two holy sacraments.—Now a doctrine, which teaches us the knowledge of ourselves and the high purposes for which we were created and redeemed;—a doctrine, which is adapted to our fallen nature and conducive to our social and private, to our present and future happiness;—a doctrine, purified of every superstitious ceremony and retaining only necessary and profitable duties, and which is recommended by the brightest example that ever appeared upon earth,—a doctrine,—which is so full of hope and consolation to the weary and the heavy-laden, and which directs us where to flee for succor in all our troubles and adversities, — where to turn and repose our longing eyes for deliverance:—a doctrine like this must have clearly proved, that He who delivered it—was, of a truth, that Holy “Prophet,” whom the scriptures had repeatedly predicted, and whom the Jews had so long been encouraged to expect.

As our blessed Lord incontestibly proved that he possessed the power of expounding the will of his heavenly Father, so did he as clearly evince himself to be a "Prophet," by foretelling future events. —For how minutely have those momentous circumstances been fulfilled, which were foretold by Him, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel—in which portion of sacred scripture is contained one of the plainest and most important prophecies that can be found in all the sacred writings? Before the destruction of the Jewish city and temple—"false Christs did rise up and deceive many,"—and the predictions of "future wars and tumults" were verified by thousands, and tens of thousands of persons, who were slain in the bitter contentions, which the Jews maintained, from the base principles of pride, hatred, and ambition. In those "beginnings of sorrow" such famines and such pestilences—such earthquakes, such portentous signs occurred, as manifested, beyond dispute, that our Lord spake in the true spirit of prophecy. And when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed,—so intirely and so completely was their destruction effected, that, after the foundations of the latter were rooted up, by the Roman army, the ploughshare was driven through them, thereby leaving a most awful confirmation to posterity of that part of the prediction, which declared, "that not one stone should be left upon another" of those stupen-

dous buildings, which were once the glory of the Jews, and the admiration of surrounding kingdoms. And, my brethren, if the other prophecies be not yet fulfilled—if the name and Gospel of our blessed Redeemer be not, as yet, universally believed in, and embraced, we may nevertheless rest assured,—that all the predictions, which that holy character pronounced, as a “Prophet,” only wait the arrival of the appointed period, which infinite Wisdom has determined to be the proper season for their awful and minute accomplishment.

Secondly. Another character in which the Messiah was predicted, and expected to appear, was that of a “Prince or King,” to whom all power should be given “in the heavens above—in the earth beneath,” and over all things visible and invisible.—And this character our Saviour directly and expressly allows of himself, for, in answer to the insnaring inquiry of Pilate, “art thou the King of the Jews?” He replied, “thou sayest that I am a King.” To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”——The homage, indeed, that was paid our Saviour at his birth, and at the termination of his exceedingly great and unparalleled sufferings by Persons, and by Objects that were wholly beyond the control of human influence, evidently proves his kingly rank. For angels sang their Hallelujahs at his nativity and proclaimed “glory to

God in the highest, and on earth peace—good-will towards men.” And at the melancholy period of his death, all nature acknowledged Him to be the Lord,—“ for the Sun was darkened, the vail of the Temple was rent in twain,—the earth quaked,—graves were opened and the bodies of the Saints arose, and appeared unto many.”

To these unusual testimonies of his regal power may be added that complete triumph which He has obtained over his temporal, and which He will, eventually, establish over all his spiritual enemies. Over the Jewish nation which crucified him, He has exemplified his sovereign dominion.—He foretold that its destruction should take place “ before the generation passed away,” which had joined in the insulting and vociferous exclamation of “ crucify him—crucify him.”—And it was so—for within the period of forty years, they were signally punished by the Roman army, which was merely the instrument of his directing will, and their city, their temple, and their nation, were completely and wonderfully destroyed.

As, moreover, in the exercise of his regal power, he subdued his temporal, so will he finally conquer all his spiritual adversaries;—“He must reign,” writes Saint Paul, “ until he hath put all enemies under his feet.” Sin, which is the greatest enemy of the soul of man, has found its destructive influence materially affected by the preaching of the Gospel,—and,

although we too frequently, as every heart bears witness, resist the impulses of divine Grace, which we inwardly feel, yet, those checks to a vicious life may be considered as striking instances of Christ's ruling power. Though a malignant, and on every possible occasion, a determined enemy to the truth,—Satan, the parent of sin, and Prince of the infernal Spirits, was compelled to acknowledge our Lord's uncontrolled authority over all his agents and over all his malicious designs. When we hear the ministers of darkness crying out, and making the following unwilling confessions—"Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? We know thee, who thou art—the holy one of God!"—When, again, we hear them anticipating the period of their reign, and inquiring "whether the Son of God were come to torment them before their time"—we shall not—indeed, we cannot desire any stronger testimonies of Christ's victorious power. Yea, in due time, Death itself, "the last enemy," will be subdued by his Almighty hand.—"And, then, shall be brought to pass the saying that is written—death is swallowed up in victory. Thanks, therefore, be to God who hath given us this victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—These, my brethren, are some of the splendid and beneficial instances, in which we behold how faithfully our blessed Redeemer has assumed his predicted character of a "Prince, or King."

Thirdly. The other dignified office of a "Priest," which is equally distinct from the two former, was as minutely fulfilled by Jesus Christ. From sacred scripture we learn, that there were two orders of the Priesthood—one of which was to offer sacrifice and bless the people, after the order of Aaron,—and the other, to consist in a blessing only, after the order of Melchizedek. Now, the Redeemer of the world fulfilled both these holy offices in his own sacred person, and consequently, in those respects also, answered the early predictions and expectations of his coming. As a Priest, for instance, after the order of Aaron, He offered up a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and, thereby, completed that stupendous work of satisfaction for sin, to which all the legal sacrifices referred. Having executed the first, He entered upon the second office, that of blessing the people, which he still continues and will continue to discharge, until the end of the world, and He is, therefore, properly called in the word of God, "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." And truly various and inestimable are the ways in which He blesses us in his priestly character;—first, by the communication of that "Holy Spirit" by which He himself was raised from the dead;—secondly, by sending that spirit "to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,"—and by appointing a succession of ministers to work in men's hearts a cheerful submis-

sion to his doctrines ;—thirdly, by giving us Grace, and by inspiring us with strength to obtain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil ;—fourthly, by interceding with God for us ;—and lastly, by praising and blessing his Father, for ever in Heaven, for all his goodness and mercy in giving us the victory over sin and death, by the blood of the Lamb, and the power of his grace.

After this minute manner has the only begotten Son of God discharged the duties of the Priesthood according to the order of Aaron, and Melchizedek, and, consequently, fulfilled the third essential office that he was predicted and expected to perform—we may, therefore, very appropriately conclude this illustration of our Saviour's sacerdotal character with the following language of the apostle—"As every high priest is appointed to offer up gifts and sacrifices—so, Christ offered up himself a sacrifice for sin. By his own oblation of himself once offered, he made a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ;—wherefore, He is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by Him—seeing, that he sitteth at the right hand of God, and ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Thus, my brethren, as regards this article of our Christian Creed, I have endeavored to shew you plainly—but, I trust, satisfactorily—that, in the fullness of time, an eminent person was to appear in the

world, whose name was to be called Jesus—and whose office was to be that of Christ, or anointed. I have, also, endeavored to shew, that the sacred writings, those authentic records of divine truth, contain various predictions concerning Him, in the character of a “Prophet”—“a King,” and “a Priest,”—and I have reminded you that the Jews, who were the highly favored people of God, did expect Him in those threefold offices, and that they were most faithfully fulfilled by Him in his human nature.—You must not, however, retire from a consideration of this subject, with the idea, that all our proofs concerning this important article of our belief are confined to those three testimonies that I have mentioned. Were it necessary still further to corroborate the evidence, which I have collected, I could remind you of many more—I could remind you that the Messiah came in “the fulness of time,” when “the sceptre had departed from Judah;”—when Daniel’s “weeks were accomplished;—and—when the second temple was standing. I could request you to recollect, how minutely our Lord’s family, and the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances of his birth, corresponded to the features, that were revealed respecting them. I could narrate to you some of our Saviour’s beautiful parables and sententious sayings, by which you would again acknowledge, as you have often done before—and as his enemies, during

his ministry, were constrained to do—"that no man spake as He spake;"—and I could display such instances of his regal power,—when He said to the blind—"receive thy sight;"—to the deaf, "hear;"—to the dumb, "speak;"—to the raging sea, "be still;"—and to the dead,—"arise;"—commands, which were no sooner given than they were obeyed,—as would, the more you mused upon them, the more amaze you, even as the surrounding multitude were amazed, at the "mighty power of God."—These most interesting evidences of the divine nature concluded—I could lead you to the consideration of that visit of humility which, the service of the rolling year again records;—to the scenes of his "agony, and bloody sweat;"—to "his cross and passion;"—to "his precious death and burial;"—to "his glorious resurrection and ascension," and to the fulfilment of his promise of sending "another Comforter," to supply his place, and "to abide with us for ever." But, apprehensive, that if the proofs already submitted to you do not convince your judgment, volumes and volumes of testimony, would not avail, I shall close, at this period, the reference to all other evidence; and briefly state, what influence the knowledge of the threefold character of Christ should produce upon our conduct.

You profess then to believe that Jesus Christ was that "Prophet," who was to come into the world. Now if your faith be active and unfeigned, you will

give an hearty assent to his revealed word, as it is contained in the pages of Holy Writ. When your fallible and finite comprehension cannot explain, or account for that, which you know to be the word of God you must not suffer any improper doubt to arise in your minds concerning its authenticity, but should humble your proud reason to the principles of the mystery revealed,—and obey—as correctly as you can, all your Saviour's institutions, commands, and means of grace—in order, that you may not destroy, but confirm your hopes of glory.

When, in the next place, you say, with your minister, “I believe in Jesus Christ”—you profess the Son of God to be that exalted character, at whose “name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” If, then, your professions be sincere, you will, as subjects of that immortal king of heaven, be obedient, be faithful—be constant in your adorations. As there is no other Being, by whom you can be saved, you must deliberately vow, and cheerfully pay to Him, the most dutiful allegiance. You must earnestly contend against all kinds of sin, which are the spiritual enemies of your heavenly King:—You must trust him with all your concerns; and you must rely solely upon His sovereign power for deliverance from evil.

As, lastly, you believe Him to be your “High Priest,” who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the

Son of God, you must hold fast your professions.”— If He be really the object of your faith, in this character, as well as in the other two, for it is only to those, who acknowledge this union and receive him in their hearts, in the three offices which we have considered, that He will be a Saviour—you will pray to Him, as your “High Priest,” for the blessing of divine grace, to enable you to answer the purposes of your spiritual calling. — And when He sheds that blessing upon you from the throne of mercy, you must humbly and gratefully accept it,—and not use it, in despising your weaker brethren, but in correcting and reforming your own lives,—because, it is only upon the due exercise of this grace, that you can justly hope for pardon of your sins and eternal salvation after death.

These are the practical effects which the knowledge of this part of the Apostles’ Creed, must have upon your conduct. Must have I say,—because your everlasting happiness, or misery, depends upon your acceptance, or rejection of Jesus Christ. Where once the Gospel has been preached—the people, who neglect to embrace and live by that Gospel, will become more inexcusable in the day of judgment, than were even guilty Sodom and Gomorrah. Such, as have never heard the glad tidings of salvation, will be judged in mercy, and have the want, of that inestimable blessing graciously supplied, and be reckoned with, in proportion to the light

imparted. But your case is by no means parallel to theirs. You have had announced to you the event, for which the world had been waiting for four thousand years. You have seen the accomplishment of a promise, which many prophets had predicted—which innumerable ceremonies had typified, and for which so many just men had waited. If, then, you reject this hour of the vineyard, it will be your own act—and the consequences of such decision will be fatal to your everlasting peace.

But beloved, I hope better things of you, and that by your future conduct, you will be enabled to share the transports of joy, which the “glad tidings” of our Saviour’s birth should produce in every heart; for if the “Heavenly Host” sang “Glory to God” for the incarnation of his Son, what infinite cause have sinners to adore this unbounded love and mercy!—I hope that the testimonies which you have heard to-day with your outward ears, will so deeply impress you, as to lead you to search the scriptures with a teachable mind, that you may learn for yourselves, how far the doctrine which I have delivered is of God. Do this with humility, and the same happy assurance may be applied to you in your pious labors, as Christ delivered to the Jews. “If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” God will graciously increase your faith, your knowledge and your religious disposition. And the word which

you have heard will become indeed, "the word of life."

May therefore the God of Peace, who brought our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead,—that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us wise unto salvation,—make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.

Acts 8th, 37—partly.

“ I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

THIS solemn confession “ that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ” was made upon the following interesting occasion.—As a person of great authority, under Candace, queen of Ethiopia, was returning from Jerusalem, sitting in his chariot and reading that part of the prophecy of Isaiah, which related to the sufferings and death of our blessed Saviour, there met him by direction of the Spirit, Philip, who was one of the seven men, that were ordained Deacons, to assist in the ministration of the church—and who asked him, “ understandest thou, what thou readest ? ” Upon the Eunuch’s inquiry, in consequence of this question whether the portion of scripture that he had been reading alluded to the prophet Isaiah, or, to some other eminent character, “ the Apostle opened his mouth, and began

at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Desirous of being made a disciple of that holy and divine Person, and arriving at a place convenient for administering the right of baptism, the new convert said, "see, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" And Philip replied, "if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And the man answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

The doctrine expressed in this brief confession, is of the very utmost importance to every human being, to whom the glad tidings of salvation have been made known;—so much so, indeed, that it seems, that the Apostle would not baptize his new and sincere convert, before he had received from him a direct acknowledgment, "that Jesus Christ was the Son of God."—With ourselves, the same unfeigned belief is indispensable. It is made a leading article of our Christian faith,—and to the explanation, and establishment of this doctrine we are now arrived.

In the Apostles' Creed, this part of the Messiah's character is very concisely expressed—"I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son,"—but, if we turn to the Nicene system of belief, we shall find the same article proposed to us in these more copious words,"—"and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of

very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." Some one may, perhaps, here inquire, where was the necessity of multiplying creeds? For, if the former be a summary of the Apostles' faith, the latter surely is unnecessary.

As this observation is frequently advanced by the enemies of our pure and venerable church, and also has had weight with some persons whose minds were fearful and unsettled, I shall briefly remind you of the periods and occasions, when both these forms of confession were compiled. The first of these summaries of Christian doctrine, if it was not drawn up by the Apostles themselves, was certainly derived from the very days in which they lived, as is evident from the testimonies of many ancient writers. One grand view, with which it was composed, appears to have been this, that when they were separated from each other, for the work of the ministry, they might have some clear and fundamental rule of faith, and not be suspected of expounding, at different places, opposite doctrines to their Christian converts. In this manner was the "good seed" sown, and it flourished, and encreased, almost beyond belief,—but, as our blessed Lord foretold "the enemy soon began to sow tares among the wheat." In the fourth century a Sect arose, which maintained, that the Word was not eternal,—but, only created before all other things,—and, that

the Holy Ghost was not God. To suppress this heresy, and to establish the co-essentiality of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, was the Nicene Creed composed. And alas! the necessity is still most pressing for our preserving, maintaining, and professing it, in the present age.—For the vital doctrine of the Gospel continues to be no less impiously and heretically attacked,—the Divinity of our blessed Lord is, by some, openly denied—Himself degraded and numbered amongst fallible and mortal men,—all adoration to Him deemed improper, and the members of our true and Apostolic Church are branded with idolatry. The present subject, therefore, is exceedingly interesting, and the event is, even to the salvation of our souls, of all other concerns the most deeply important. From the consideration of it, I trust, if you will grant me your usual attention, that this great article of our faith will appear to proceed immediately from the Holy Scriptures, and to derive the existence from that supreme authority,—and, consequently, that every Christian does rightly in confessing that Jesus Christ is the “only begotten Son of God.” As we proceed, let us humbly implore assistance from above, that our attention may be accompanied with divine Grace, so, that we may approve things that are excellent, and be sincere and without offence, unto the day of Christ.

Now, revelation, which is the surest, and indeed

the only guide to direct us in the mysteries of our holy religion, asserts that Christ is the Son of God, in numerous passages, and on a variety of occasions. We are not only assured, that the Almighty would send a person, "in the fulness of time," to atone for the sins of the world, but also that the person so sent would be his "only Son." A direct allusion of this nature occurs in the second Psalm, where it is said—"thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." In many other parts of sacred scripture, it is said, that the Messiah would be the Son of God, and God his father,—that the Almighty would establish the throne of his kingdom for ever—and that He should cry unto his Father, and say, "thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my Salvation."

The declarations from the old Testament, which reveal the relationship of Christ, with the Almighty, are supported by a variety of strong and personal appellations in the new. Saint Matthew informs us, that, at Christ's Baptism, and transfiguration, "a voice was heard from heaven," declaring our Lord to be the "beloved Son of God, in whom his Father was well pleased." In another part of his Gospel, he alludes to an expression of the prophet Isaiah, where it is said, "behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom I have put my Spirit, to shew judgment unto the Gentiles." In Saint Paul's epistle to the Galatians, he is styled,

“ God’s dear Son.”—In his epistle to the Romans—
“ God’s own Son,”—and, that fine strain of reasoning to be found in the epistle to the Hebrews, is sufficient to convince any serious mind, not only of Christ’s sonship, but of his divinity.—The subject to which I allude, you will find in the first chapter of that epistle, and I earnestly recommend it to your careful perusal. The evangelist Saint John, again, who leaned on the bosom of our Redeemer at the last supper, and who had experienced from his dear Master many and peculiar instances of regard and affection,—calls him— “ the only Son of God ”—
“ his only begotten ”—“ and his dear Son,”—“ the image of the invisible God,”—and “ the first born of every creature.” When, therefore, we observe the writers of the old Testament foretelling this sonship of Jesus—and the writers of the new recording these heavenly testimonies of that relationship,—when, we find the Apostles of our Lord, after his death, going from one extremity of the earth to the other, preaching and insisting on the belief of the sonship and divine nature of Christ, as essential to salvation,—when we read, also, that the apostate spirits could not withhold their unwilling assent to the divinity of the ever-blessed Jesus ;—and, lastly, when we find that our Lord Himself, not merely admitted his being “ the only Son of God,” on a variety of public occasions, but, at certain times expressed himself on that point, in these decisive

terms,—“ I proceed forth and came from God ”—
“ Before Abraham was, I am ”—and, “ no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven ”—we must acknowledge that the appellation of Son of God, given to Christ is peculiar and appropriate ; and that it is surprising that any human being, who enjoys the light of the Gospel, can withhold his assent to the divinity of our blessed Lord.

If it had been an error, my brethren, to have acknowledged him by that distinguished title,—if He, who was the “ truth ” itself had not possessed a just right to that glorious name, can we imagine that the meek and lowly Jesus would not have corrected the false opinion of his hearers,—and have told them, what ought to have been their faith respecting Him ? Can we for a moment, conceive that He, who laid down his life for mankind, would have made Himself the object of their adoration, if his divinity had not been unquestionable—and he had not been “ Light of Light, and very God of very God ? ”

Nor, indeed, did our blessed master possess the mere title only of the Son of God, for He had such distinctions paid to Him, as were never paid before, and which prove him to be the Son of God, in a more eminent degree than can be applied either to the Israelites, as the chosen people, or to ourselves, as the children of one common parent. His

birth, for instance, denoted him to bear a peculiar relationship to the Creator of all things,—for, “the Holy Ghost came upon Mary his mother, and the power of the most High overshadowed her, and therefore that Holy King that was born of her, was called the Son of God.”

Our Lord's resurrection from the grave, is, also, an evidence of his sonship,—for, “if they, who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, die no more,—and are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the sons of the resurrection,”—how nearly allied must that divine person be to God—who became “the first-fruits of them that slept,”—“and the first begotten from the dead?”

Another proof may be drawn from his extraordinary mission, and unexampled holiness of life. For as Jesus united in his sacred character the threefold offices of “Prophet—King and Priest,”—and was “spotless and without sin,” he must have been the Son of God.—The appointment, moreover, which was conferred upon Him proves the assertion to be well founded, for the Almighty constituted Him, “heir of all things,” and “made Him head over every thing in the Church”—He put “principalities under his feet,” and gave him “power and might and dominion,” and delegated to him, all authority in heaven, and in earth.—Thus, for these, and many other similar reasons, we are taught to

confess with our lips "that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God." The next thing to be remarked on this leading article of our faith is the distinction between our Lord, and the other children of the Almighty—on this important subject, also, our search must be solely guided by divine testimony. When that infallible direction leaves us, we must meekly retire from the investigation, and not attempt, either on this, or, any other point, "to be wise above that which is written."

Our Saviour's pre-existence to the Creation of the world denotes an infinite difference between his relationship with the Father and ours. It is only after death, that we are said to be with God, but, before Jesus became incarnate, He was in heaven, from whence He descended to redeem our iniquities. This, as I have before mentioned, our Lord frequently affirmed to be the fact,—and his ascension, was but a translation into heaven. "What," said our Lord unto his unbelieving countrymen, "what and if ye shall see the son of man ascend up where he was before?" This pre-existence is also very plainly expressed by the language, which he used to his father, but a short time previous to his most cruel judgment and ignominious death, and now, "O Father," said he, "glorify me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

There is another very material difference between

Him and every other Being, and that arises from the power ascribed to him. "God," says Saint Paul, "created all things by Jesus Christ." "By Him," declares the same apostle to the Hebrews, "God made the world." "By him," saith Saint John, "were all things made, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And it appears by the following distinct declaration of the Apostle to the Gentiles, that he was determined, if possible, that no reasonable doubt should remain on the mind of any candid inquirer after truth,—for he proclaims, "that all things were created by Him, that are in the Heavens and in the Earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for Him."

Our Lord's existence also with God, not only before all other creatures, but from all eternity, denotes his peculiar relationship with his Father. In Saint Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, Jesus is called "the first-born of every creature"—and in that to the Hebrews, the Almighty himself is introduced saying unto his Son—"thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." In the revelations of Saint John he is styled the "Amen," the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God," by whom God made all things,—which excludes all time, previous to Christ's existence. In the same holy writings he is described "as the

first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha, and the Omega, which was—and is—and is to come.” In this manner are these same phrases used to God the Father to express His eternity and immortality, so that we may very safely conclude with the Apostle—that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our blessed Lord, “the same yesterday, to day, and forever.”

Having established the material difference that exists between the ever-blessed Son of God and ourselves, I proceed to call your attention, to another part of our Saviour’s character, equally distinct, of which the scriptures remind us, and that is, his divine nature. As our Redeemer “was not made, not created,”—as He was the author of all created beings, all things being made by Him,—as he existed from the beginning of all time, he must assuredly be God, because such state, such action, and such property, belong solely to the Supreme Being. It is God only, who is original and independent, it is God only who has formed every thing, and, as we are told by Saint Paul to the Hebrews, and to Timothy—it is God only, “who has immortality.” Before our blessed Master assumed the form of a servant, He existed, says the Holy Ghost, in the form of God—“deeming it not robbery to be equal with God.” “In the beginning writes Saint John, “was the word, and the word was with God—and the word was God.” “God was manifested in the flesh,”

says Saint Paul, "justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed upon in the world, and received up into glory." Expressions these which all relate to Jesus of Nazareth, and declare him to be God,—and the same inspired writer, having enumerated the privileges of the Jewish nation in his epistle to the Romans, concludes his subject by stating—"out of whom Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

If, my brethren, your minds are not satisfied, if you are not convinced by these authorities, and you should deem them to be too few in number,—you should remember the little space of time, that the usual limits of a discourse allow to such important subjects, at least, without wearying the attention of our hearers—and supply the paucity by your own diligence—by "searching" in your retirement at home, for those many other and almost innumerable appellations in the holy scriptures, which ascribe to the Redeemer of the world a condition the most glorious and the most exalted. "Search the scriptures," for in them you will find every thing that is great—and eternal—and divine—implied under his peculiar title of Jehovah. You will find his attributes such as incontestably prove him to be God. You will observe his eternity from his promise to his disciples "of being present with them to the end of the world."—You will behold the plenitude of his unbounded authority, "by his upholding

all things by his power"—by his raising the dead, and by his remission of the sins of the whole world,—acts of mercy these, which though he declared them to be the works of the Most High, yet which He himself did without labour, and whenever the occasion required, declaring, at the same time, that "whatsoever the Father doeth, the Son doeth likewise."—Now, my brethren, can we imagine that the Almighty and everlasting Being who proclaimed amidst thunder and lightning "thou shalt have none other Gods but me"—who is represented throughout the Bible, as a "jealous God," and who will not give his glory to another, would bestow upon any creature, how exalted soever he may be, all the state, all the majesty, power, authority, and dignity, which the scriptures ascribe to Jesus Christ, and which He so indisputably did possess, and on which he so invariably acted? Can we think, that He, who was all meekness, all humility, and truth, would have arrogated to himself divine honors, unless his claims had been well founded? Or, can we believe that the apostles of a Master so humble and so correct, would have dared to apply to him the distinguishing characteristics of the Supreme God, had they not received the most perfect conviction of their justness and propriety?

Anxious, my brethren, as I feel to impress, and to leave the full force of this part of my subject upon your hearts,—the divinity of our blessed Lord :

I must solemnly call upon you to consider, that this essential Doctrine is not a mere point of speculation, or of curiosity, but one that includes in its consequences all the great, the best, and glorious expectations of human nature. With it, all the most important, most cheering, and peculiar doctrines of our religion must stand, or fall. For—if Jesus Christ be not God—farewell, then, to all our hopes and consolations! Farewell, then, to all the gracious and blessed promises of the Gospel,—so encouraging to the repentant sinner, so soothing to the anxious mind, when cast down with a deep sense of guilt and fear! Where then is the refuge to which the awakened sinner can apply?—The law of God, —strict and unalterable in its demands, stands forth arrayed in all its terrors—“and by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified.” But acknowledge and confess—as you are authorized to do, the divinity of our Lord,—and, all these terrors instantly subside. Behold the unutterable blessings that result, and rejoice in their divine author! Triumph Christians, in the religion that you profess! Your Saviour interceded with his Father to redeem the sins of all mankind.—The mediation of the Son was acceptable and precious in his Father’s sight. The sacrifice he offered, was “full, perfect, and sufficient.” Not the sacrifice of bulls, or of goats, but the sacrifice of Himself. By which oblation he has satisfied the justice of the Almighty, and from

henceforth, every sincere believer in Jesus may look up to heaven for salvation, in—and through the merits and mediation of the “only begotten Son of God.”

Thus, have I brought before you, the most convincing testimonies, from the old and new Testament, to prove that Jesus Christ, the long promised and expected Messiah, was the “only begotten Son of God.”—After having established this momentous point, and, in order to explain what this part of the Creed implies, I proved to you, on the authority of the scripture, the great difference, that existed between the Son of God and ourselves—by which we may perceive his divine as well as his human nature—and in what manner He is our Lord and God.

I know only of one other point of doctrine, that is connected with the present subject, and that is, the Unity of Christ with his Heavenly Father. From his own declaration we learn this mysterious fact—“I and the Father are one,” said he to the questionnaire and unbelieving Jews—“The Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Christ Jesus, therefore, being God,—he must, of necessity, partake of the same individual essence with his Father, so that we may truly say—“that the Godhead of the Father—and of the Son, is all one—the glory equal—the Majesty co-eternal.” But, how that essence is communicated—in what manner, He is the invisible God, “the express image of his person, the brightness of

his glory," and how he is the life, the wisdom, and the power of God, are circumstances of no importance to us, in this present world. They are scriptural terms, which denote the most perfect unity between the Father and the Son, and assure us that Christ is "God of God, and very God of very God." In this awful mystery—in the union of the divine with the human nature, as well as in many other instances, we plainly perceive "that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts." If, however, we cannot fathom "how these things can be," we know clearly, all, that is essential to our eternal interests.—We know that we are commanded to "believe in the Son of God,"—because, by that belief, we are, in a mystical manner, united to Him, and raised above the world. "To as many as received him," writes Saint John,—“to them gave He the power to become the sons of God.”—"Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God," "and who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

I would earnestly recommend, in conclusion, to those of you, my beloved brethren, who have not as yet thought so seriously as you ought to think upon this leading article of our faith, to determine what degree of belief and respect you think is due to the evidences that have been now produced—and I pray fervently to God, that He will give you an under-

standing heart to see clearly “the things that belong to your salvation.”

And you, happily, who do confess, with the man of *Æthiopia*, that “Jesus is the Son of God,” remember with what veneration, you, above all men, ought to receive that Gospel, which was proposed to mankind by God himself.—Consider how much it is your duty to contemplate that scheme of grace and mercy, which Christ brought down from heaven, and with what sincerity, with what zeal, you should embrace it. You know the deadly nature of sin,—you know the tremendous sacrifice required to redeem us from its future dominion;—and—after the manifestation of God’s wrath against it—you, who are now supposed to be “dead from sin, will surely not live any longer therein,” but will “glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.” This is the conduct, this is the example, which we, who are believers, are expected to propose, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Let us, then, remember these expectations to the last breath we draw—and let us endeavour to prove in life and in death that we are, what we profess to be—Christians—in faith and good works.

JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

St. John, 13th, 18th.—partly.

“Ye call me Master and Lord—and ye say well; for so I am.”

THESE were the words of our blessed Redeemer to his disciples, after He had condescended to wash their feet, and, by his gracious example, had proposed a most interesting and instructive pattern of the humility and cheerfulness, with which they were to perform offices of mutual kindness one towards another. “Ye call me Lord and Master,” says He, and “ye say well; for so I am.”—I am indeed the only Son of God, and Saviour of the world, “and, if I your Lord and Master have washed your feet: ye ought, also, to wash one another’s feet.” If I have condescended to do this menial service; ye ought to perform, with all meekness and alacrity, the humblest offices of Christianity—“for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you.”

We proceed now, my brethren, to consider the last distinction applied to our blessed Saviour in the Apostles' Creed—to which, upon humble investigation, we shall find Him as strictly entitled, as to his being called “the only begotten Son of God.”—For, if we acknowledge him to be the one, he must be, of course, the other also,—because the only Son of God, is, of necessity Heir and Lord of his Father's house;—and all other Beings, whether men, or angels, who bear the name of Sons are but the servants of Christ.

The authority, that I have chosen to establish this part of the Christian faith, is of the highest nature;—namely the positive acknowledgement of our blessed Lord himself, who would not have arrogated such power, had he not possessed the most substantial claims for so doing. It will be the object of my present discourse to remind you of the several senses, in which the titles of Lord and Master may be taken,—a subject, at once, highly instructive and important,—and may the divine blessing attend and sanctify our meditations! For, since it is made an article of our faith, and since so many of the prayers of our Apostolic church conclude with the phrase—“through Jesus Christ our Lord”—most necessary is it, that the uninformed should be instructed, and the unthinking and forgetful be reminded—that they have a “Lord and Master,” to whom they should be obedient, and by whom, eter-

nal rewards and punishments will be ultimately dispensed.

That the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity is our "Lord and Master," we learn from those authentic records of divine truth, which were given by inspiration, in order that we might know and believe the things, which concern our immortal happiness. For in addition to the assurance of our Saviour himself in the text, we find the Son of God frequently mentioned by the inspired writers in those exalted characters. By the prophet Jeremiah He is called "the Lord our righteousness." By the prophet Malachi his coming was thus foretold—"the Lord whom ye seek shall come suddenly to his temple."—"They found not the body of the Lord Jesus," writes Saint Luke; and by that name did the first Martyr Stephen address the Redeemer, when, in the agonies of death he recommended his soul to his care—"Lord Jesus," said he, "receive my spirit." And the Apostles, in their several épistles, have applied the same appellation to their crucified Saviour, "Ye serve the Lord Jesus,"—"to us there is but one God, the Father; and one Lord Jesus Christ;"—and, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."—If, to these authorities—first, that of our Lord, in the text—secondly, that of the Prophets, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,—and thirdly, that of Christ's immediate followers, who were eyewitnesses of all things that he did in the land of the

Jews, and in Jerusalem, and who were chosen of God to preach through his name, remission of sins to whomsoever believeth,—if I say—to these authorities we add this very particular circumstance that the original Jehovah spoken of by the antient prophets, is Christ himself, as may be shewn in a variety of instances, we must be convinced, that the only begotten Son of God is “Lord.” In that character is Jesus referred to by the prophet Joel, when he revealed this consoling assurance,—“that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord—or Jehovah—shall be saved.” And Saint Paul asserts the same thing in his Epistle to the Romans—“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus thou shalt be saved”—“and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

From these authorities we perceive on what high and satisfactory evidence we say I believe in Jesus Christ, as our “Lord.” Now, as this expressive title has several significations, the next thing necessary to shew is, how very properly they may be ascribed, either collectively, or individually, to the Son of God, the true and only Messiah.

And first, The highest sense of the term, and on which a learned commentator has applied it to the text, is that of a Prince, or person possessing power. And Jesus Christ is very properly our Prince, for we are all his subjects. This difference of condition between Lord Jesus and ourselves is thus accounted for in the

the sacred writings. Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, inquires, "For unto which of the angels said he, at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, endureth for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." And long before that exalted personage appeared in the flesh it was foretold of him by the prophet Isaiah, "that the government should be upon his shoulder: and that of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end."

A second sense of the term Lord comprises also that of master, a character which may, with great propriety, be applied to our blessed Saviour, because we are his servants. We shall find, upon investigation, this distinction no less plainly established than the former,—for, in several passages of the sacred writings, we find the Church to be represented as a House, or Family, and Jesus Christ declared to be its head." The whole family in heaven and in earth is named after Him." And our blessed Lord is pleased himself to assume that character in his application of the parable, which enforced upon his followers the necessity and the advantage of constant vigilance. "Blessed is that servant," said he, "whom when his Lord, or master, cometh he shall find so doing." The wages which he shall then distribute as the recompense of good and faithful service, and the stripes, which he shall order to be inflicted, as

the punishment of neglect and disobedience, very properly place him in the situation of a master, and clearly prove him to be such.

The term Lord has a third signification in the Apostles' Creed,—and implies the Son of God's lawful proprietorship over all mankind. As this information is of the highest importance to every true professor of the Gospel, accordingly there is no doctrine, or revelation, more clearly revealed in the word of God. On this character materially depends our relationship with Jesus Christ, our pardon with the Almighty, and our promises and prospects of everlasting glory. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," writes the Apostle—"We are not our own, for we are bought with a price." He has purchased us indeed with an invaluable price, no less than with "his most precious blood." In another place the same Apostle observes, "ye are bought with a price; but ye are not the servants of men." And Saint Peter, foretelling the destructive conduct of "false teachers," declares, "they shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them." Now a purchase is of so solemn and binding a nature, that it takes away and destroys all our independence, and in a peculiar manner subjects us to Christ's disposal, and confirms his exclusive right and title to us, as—our lawful proprietor.

A fourth sense of the term, to which we are direct-

ing our attention, is the one, in which our Saviour has used it in the words of the text, namely as a teacher and instructor. "Ye call me Lord and master;—and ye say well, for so I am." Whilst He reproved the vain Pharisees for assuming the names of masters and guides in doctrine, and blamed them for being called such, by the ignorant multitude, He directed the application of the term to its pure and proper object, that is, to Himself, saying unto them "be not called masters, for one is your master even Christ. And in this instructive character he was predicted by the prophet Isaiah, and expected by the people of Israel.—It was said of him, when He should appear in the world—that "He should give the knowledge of salvation to his people, and should guide their feet in the way of peace."

The last import of the term Lord is Leader, or Captain of his subjects:—and this office is very significantly mentioned in scripture, and distinctly applied to the Son of God; for, He is there said to be the "Captain of our faith—the Captain of our life—the Captain of our Salvation—our chief Shepherd—the High Priest of our profession, and Bishop of our souls." "The Lord is our light and salvation, whom, then, shall we fear?" The Lord is the strength of our life, of whom then shall we be afraid?

All these appellations you clearly see are assigned

to the ever-blessed Son of God, and denote the strict propriety of his designation “ as Lord and Captain of our Salvation.”

Such are the several senses of the title, which is applied to Jesus Christ in our Creed, and, as an instructive inference, that naturally follows from the subject, you must allow me to remind you, that when you say with the Minister—“ I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord,” you acknowledge that adorable person to be invested with all power, both in heaven and earth, to be the true Jehovah, whose Being is original and eternal, and on whom, all other creatures essentially depend.—You acknowledge him, also, to be your Master, whose servants you are—your Proprietor, as possessing a right over you, by the purchase of his most precious blood—your Teacher and Guide in righteousness,—and your Captain, who has conquered all your spiritual enemies, and who will conduct you, if it be not your own fault, to the heavenly Canaan,—the land of never-ending life and glory.

Lest, however, this title should be unhappily questioned, or captiously disputed,—and lest any one should pertinaciously inquire, as the Scribes and Pharisees did, in our Saviour’s time—“ by what authority doest thou these things,” and who gave thee the authority to exercise this Lordship over us? I shall briefly submit to your attention some of the most striking causes, or operations, by which Jesus so justly

acquired the appellation of Lord, and the right to govern mankind.

We may observe, in the first place, that God the Father “has given him power over all flesh”—“has delivered,” as it is expressed in Scripture, “all things into his hand,” and “has put all things under his feet.” Thus we observe that He who is the first cause, has, by his free donation, given unto his only begotten Son uncontroled dominion over every creature visible and invisible, above, and upon, and under the earth. And behold, how forcibly this high privilege is illustrated in the following address to the Supreme Being, which our Lord made, but a short time previous to his crucifixion, and observe, how absolutely God has made over the best of earthly creatures, all humble and sincere Christians to his blessed Son. “Those whom thou gavest me,” said Christ, “have I kept”—“and this is the Father’s will that sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing.”

Besides this free gift of the Father to his only begotten Son, our Saviour has acquired the right of Lord, as we have before observed, by conquest. He gained the victory over sin and death—He subdued the enemy of our peace and of our nature, under whose yoke we groaned and were enslaved—“and having spoiled principalities and powers he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them.” Thus by victoriously delivering us out of the hands of our

enemies, and by giving us life and happiness, when He might have utterly destroyed us, or have kept us in bondage and misery,—he justly became “our Lord.” Let us, therefore, devoutly say with the Apostle—“that being saved from death, we will serve him without fear in all holiness and godly living.”

Having a right to govern mankind from the free gift of God, and having assumed all the privileges annexed to that right by power of conquest, Christ becomes “our Lord” also by another irresistible claim, namely by purchase.

He has bought us with an inestimable price, delivered us out of captivity—and he took upon himself the punishment, which was due to our sins. To impress most deeply upon you this great claim over us, I must call to your recollection the lost and deplorable state of human nature, when we were under the curse of the law—condemned to a miserable death—and in constant expectation of the execution of a rigorous sentence,—without hope, and, apparently, without remedy. This was man’s wretched condition, in consequence of the fall of Adam, when the Son of God became incarnate and dwelt amongst us—expired on the Cross—discharged in his own spotless person our original individual debts, and obtained reconciliation for us with his offended Father. In this manner has Jesus Christ purchased his Church with his own blood. As

members then, of that universal Church, we should own him for “our Lord,” and be obedient to his will,—for it was to promote our obedience that he delivered himself up to death—“to be the Lord of the dead,” as Saint Paul tells us, “and of the living,”—that he redeemed us from all iniquity, and “purified unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

So well founded are all these claims of our Saviour to the title of “our Lord”—that his heavenly Father, God Almighty,—“who seeth not as man seeth,” has allowed them to him, without any limitation. And, surely, we who are the children of error, ignorance and presumption, should not venture—should not dare to dispute his sovereign dominion—a dominion acquired by his patience, and by his obedience to the will of God—“Because he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name, and placed him on his right hand,” the highest seat of power and distinction, where he now sits crowned with glory and honor;—and in another place it is said—“that because Christ poured out his soul unto death—he divided him a portion with the great and a spoil with the strong.”

To these convincing reasons, which establish our Saviour’s right to the appellation of “Lord”—may be added one other, which, though it is certainly of

a nature less imperative, will yet possess a considerable influence upon every grateful mind. If they, who bestow rewards and favours upon us, are denominated our friends and benefactors and are allowed to exercise over us a just and controlling influence, how much more strong, how infinitely better founded—how strictly legal, must the claim of Christ, to be “our Lord,” appear—who freely gives us all the good things that we possess, and who preserves us from the numerous, unforeseen, and too frequently, unthought-of dangers that surround us?—It is, indeed, from his liberal and watchful hand that we receive food, when we are hungry,—drink, when we are thirsty, raiment when we are naked,—and relief, when no power appears at hand to befriend us in the needful time of trouble. By his provident and protecting care we are shielded from the terrors which prevail by day, and from the evils that assault by night. From his unbounded goodness we may expect every supply that will essentially promote our happiness. His compassion it was, that redeemed us from eternal death:—His mercy it was, that sheltered us from the wrath of God—standing between his offended Father and the sinful race of Adam—and from his justice it will be, that we shall be dealt with “without respect of persons,” and have conferred upon us eternal life—“if by patient continuance in well doing we seek for glory—honour and immortality.”

Now, my brethren, if to these impressive and un-

questionable authorities, we further add the proof to be derived from the divine nature of our blessed Saviour, nothing more, I think, will be required of me, in the consideration of the present subject, than to press upon your consciences the application of the important consequences that result from it.—If, therefore, Jesus Christ be God, which was clearly shewn in my last discourse—if, “He is in God, and God in Him,” partaking, in an equal degree, the divine essence and perfections of his Father, he must, of necessity, be “our Lord,” because “He created all things”—because “He upholdeth all things,” and because “He ordereth all things” according to his sovereign will and pleasure. If, again, Jesus Christ be man,—if he ever assumed our human nature, if he ever came upon earth, and performed all those meritorious services which are ascribed to him in the writings of everlasting truth, he must also be God,—because the sacrifice which was required as a complete satisfaction to the offended justice of the Father, none but God could make.—No man could redeem his own soul, or be the general Saviour of the fallen race of Adam.

Having now illustrated the various authorities, that revelation and reason afford us, for acknowledging the Son of God to be “our Lord,” having explained the several senses, in which that term is to be received in the Apostles’ confession of faith; and having proved our Saviour’s full right and claim to its

use and application,—I may apply to every individual present the gracious acknowledgment contained in the words of my text—“Ye do well to call him Lord and Master;”—ye do well to assent to this doctrine;—ye do well to address him in your prayers, by that super-eminent distinction;—ye do well at the name of Jesus to bow the head, or bend the knee, in acknowledgment of his just, sovereign, and actual power;—ye do well to depend upon him for all the blessings of this life, and to rely upon him, for everlasting peace, in the world to come.

But—it will not be sufficient for you only to confess your belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.—You must remember and imitate the moral, which our Saviour condescended to draw,—if I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet,”—“for I have given you an example that ye should do, as I have done to you,”—implying that, as his followers called him “Lord and Master,”—they should obey him as their Sovereign, and learn of him as their Instructor;—that it would be a gross mockery to call him by those high and expressive names, without cheerfully and diligently fulfilling his commands, and endeavouring to follow so amiable an example.

And the commands that he expects us to observe, are as easy to be understood, as they are conducive to our present and our future happiness. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good.”—We are to re-

pent and believe the Gospel, “to fear not them who kill the body, but who are not able to kill the soul—but to fear Him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.”—And as we are not able, of ourselves, to walk properly in the way of his commandments,—nor, indeed, to love those things, which he desires we should love, he enjoins us to be constant in public and in private prayer, and in the observance of the ordinary means of Grace,—such as hearing and reading his holy word, commemorating his precious death, until his coming again,—to the end, that “our light may shine before men, and we may glorify our Father, who is in Heaven.”

These are some of his principal commands, and with regard to his example, we shall find in it every thing that is amiable and exalted, as much distinguished for the higher, as the humbler duties of life, and directing our conduct equally in the more public, as in the private scenes of our earthly pilgrimage. Behold Him, then, washing his disciples feet, and learn humility and condescension! See Him, without distinction of sect or nation, healing as affectionately the Samaritan, as the Jew, and learn universal, for that alone is Christian charity! View him submissively passing the early years of his life, and administering to the wants of his parents! Remember how tenderly he recommended his weeping mother to the care of that disciple whom he loved, and be prevailed upon to practice your social

duties! Hear him commanding his disciples “to render custom to whom custom is due,” and learn obedience to the powers that are!—Follow him to the scene of his agony, to Golgotha,—hear him pray for his murderers—and “love your enemies!” that is—be just and charitable in your dealings with them, and endeavour to subdue their hatred and ill-will by kindness and compassion on your part. Behold him, in short, meekly bowing his head upon the cross—and learn resignation under all, even the severest dispensations of Almighty God!

Such is an imperfect epitome of our Lord’s bright example, and be assured—it is the duty of all, who name the name of Christ, to follow it as correctly as possible. We are called by the name of Christians,—We are denominated by that title, from the Saviour of the world, to remind us of the duties of our profession, and to make us zealous disciples of him whose name we bear. Let us advert, then, for a moment, to the records of profane history, and observe how sedulously—how submissively—multitudes have yielded to restraints the most painful—and to deprivations the most irksome,—to be ranked amongst the disciples of some celebrated Teacher or Philosopher. Thousands were there, in those dark ages, who would endure the greatest austerities, who would imitate the most glaring imperfections, and who would defend with their lives, the very vices of their master. And shall not we, in this

enlightened age, shall not we, who have no precepts imposed upon us but what are pure, no duties to practice, but what will lead to our future happiness, no example to follow, but the example of Him who was most innocent, and most perfect;—shall not we, who have Christ for our example, be equally faithful to the “Captain of our Salvation,”—be equally obedient—be equally devoted in life and in death—to the doctrines of the Master whom we profess to love and obey?

Should these considerations fail of their effect, I remind you, in conclusion, of the danger of a lukewarm conduct.—“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” And, as if this solemn appearance were not cogent enough to alarm the mere nominal Christian, our Lord has represented, in decisive terms, the case of all such, in the awful day of judgment—“Many, in that day, shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?—cast out devils, and, in thy name, done many wonderful works?—and, then, will I declare unto them, I never knew ye—depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”

For God’s sake! For the sake of your immortal souls! think frequently, think deeply, on the danger of neglecting your high calling, and remember, how impious is the mockery to say—“I believe in Jesus

Christ as my Lord," without obeying his sacred precepts. And let us earnestly pray, in conclusion, that God may grant us the grace of his holy Spirit, to enable us so faithfully to serve Him, in this life, that we fail not finally to attain his heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord!

OUR LORD'S MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION.

Matthew 1st, 22d, and part of 23d Verse.

“ Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son.”

It requires but very little observation to perceive that references are frequently made in the new Testament to events, that were predicted in the old.—Scarcely does a singular circumstance occur, and seldom a miraculous act is wrought, but we find it accompanied with the remark—“ all this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet.” Is, for instance, the child Jesus, with his parents, compelled to flee into Egypt?—His exile happened, that the saying of Hosea might come to pass, “ out of Egypt have I called my Son.”—Did Herod, in his wrath, intend to slay all the children in Bethlehem of a certain age? This was done that the prediction of Jeremiah might be accomplished, “ in Rama was there a voice heard,—lamentation,—and weeping,—and great mourning,—Rachael weep-

ing for her children,—and would not be comforted, because they are not.”

In the advanced period of our Saviour's ministry, clearer, and more direct appeals were made to ancient prophecy. Are evil spirits ejected, and the diseases of the sick relieved?—This was done, that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled—“He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.” Did our Lord make his public entry into Jerusalem on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass? This, also, was long before predicted by Zecharias—“tell ye the daughter of Sion, thy King cometh unto thee meek—and sitting on an ass, a colt the foal of an ass.”—Do his disciples forsake him?—Are his garments parted amongst the soldiers? or, does he thirst upon the cross?—“All these things,” observes Saint Luke, “were fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Christ.”

Our text, my brethren, is of a similar nature, and refers to a prophecy which Isaiah had predicted seven hundred years, before it was accomplished. It relates to the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and will naturally lead to an explanation of that part of the Apostles' Creed, to which we are now arrived, and which is so happily appropriate to the approaching season of the year, and to the duties of our Christian calling. Having reminded you, in former discourses, of the nature and offices of the

ever-blessed Son of God, I shall, in the present, submit some other very important objects of our faith to your consideration,—first, the authority on which, you believe the Messiah was “conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary;”—and, secondly, some of the principal doctrines, that are contained in this article of our Creed.

The phrase under consideration is concise, and differs very little, in point of expression, from that inserted in the Nicene Creed, where it is said—“and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary;”—and the doctrine conveyed in these two Creeds, is thus explained in the other, which is occasionally repeated in our Church, namely, the Creed of Saint Athanasius.—“The right of faith is this, —to believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man; of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood.” To this doctrine of faith it is that you are supposed to subscribe, when you say with the congregation—“I believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.”

From explaining the sense implied in this article of the Apostles' Creed, the next thing to be con-

sidered is the authority on which our Lord's miraculous conception is founded. Saint Matthew, who wrote his Gospel for the service of the Jews in Palestine, in order to confirm the faith of such, as believed our Lord to be the promised Messiah, and to convert such as believed not,—who quotes the greatest number of the passages from the Jewish Scriptures—answers the most considerable objections concerning the Christian faith—and—according to the custom of his nation, brings the genealogy of Christ from Abraham, through David to Joseph, the supposed father of Jesus, has recorded this adorable mystery in the following terms—“ Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise ; when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David,—fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS**, for he shall save his people from their sins.— Now all this was done, that might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name **EMMA-**

nuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife ; and knew her not till she had brought forth her first born son—and he called his name JESUS."

Such is the account, that is given of the wonderful conception of the Messiah by the Evangelist Saint Matthew, and by refering to the gospel of Saint Luke, we shall find the following previous circumstances to the birth of Christ recorded. In the sixth month, that is of Elizabeth's conception, the angel Gabriel, was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David : and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said,—Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, fear not Mary ; for thou hast found favor with God—and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS.—He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his Father David ; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever—and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then, said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I

know not a man? And the Angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God, for with God nothing shall be impossible."

In this very circumstantial manner have the two Evangelists related this article of our faith, under the influence of the divine spirit—an occurrence, indeed, which you will recollect, had been indistinctly predicted many ages before it came to pass, by "the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's heel"—and "by a woman's encompassing a man,"—which circumstances had also been prefigured under several supernatural events,—such as Isaac's being born of a barren mother, past child bearing,—and, also, in the instances of Sampson, of Samuel, and of John the Baptist.

To this wonderful mystery many other references are clearly and distinctly made by the inspired writers; namely,—“that the word was made flesh,”—“that God was manifested in the flesh,”—“that He took the form of a servant,”—“was made in the likeness of man,”—“and was found in the fashion of a man.”—That he assumed the “seed of Abraham”—partook “offlesh and blood”—and descended from heaven “in the likeness of sinful man.” On these plain and unquestionable authorities do the ministers of God call upon you to believe—“that Jesus

Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." And here, my brethren, I would wish you to observe that nothing more will be, at this time, said respecting the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity, than that, which relates to His influence in the conception of our Saviour,—because, when we shall arrive at the last division of the Apostles' Creed, which particularly refers to his Person and operations, you will be then reminded of the Christian faith contained in that important article.

The doctrine under consideration is undoubtedly wonderful and mysterious. The incomprehensible generation of our Lord, through the influence of the spirit, is a truth enveloped in inexplicable darkness— is a mystery never to be unveiled, or demonstrated by the intellectual powers, which have been hitherto communicated to the sons of men;—and, yet, in truth, there is nothing in it, either impossible, or, to speak with all reverence, more difficult to the Almighty, than there is in those productions, which we are in the habit of ascribing to the course of nature, but which would be more accurately imputed to the controlling power of God,—and at which we express little, or no surprise, only because they are the familiar and scarcely examined objects of our intercourse. In philosophy, as well as in religion, there are innumerable mysteries, many more, indeed, in the former, than in the latter—and yet,

we do not discard that handmaid of Science, because we cannot delve into her impenetrable secrets. It is not necessary for our salvation to know how the Unity of the two natures happened and existed,—and it is not only vain, but dangerous to attempt to discover that, which the wisdom of Providence has deemed proper to conceal. Our inquiries, with all humility, must be confined to sacred scripture,—and from that infallible guide we learn,—that Jesus Christ the only Son of God and promised Messiah was conceived and born—that He, who subsisted from all eternity in the form and nature of “perfect God”—became “perfect man.”—Had a real body, made of flesh and blood, which like ours required sustenance, was bruised with stripes—was torn with scourges—was tortured with nails,—was pierced with a spear, and suffered death. From holy scripture we collect all these astonishing particulars, and, consequently, know and believe them to be facts.—For in the four Gospels it is said that “Jesus encreased in wisdom and in stature,”—that he was “hungry and thirsty”—that He was “troubled and wept,”—and that he “died, and was buried.”

Here, therefore, we must close our inquiries respecting the Unity of the divine nature, and pursue the subject in a way more safe and satisfactory,—by briefly considering some of the most probable motives, as they appear to human reason, which in-

duced the Redeemer of mankind to "become flesh," and to unite the human with the divine nature.

To manifest, then, our Lord's goodness and pity may be deemed one reason for his taking our nature upon him,—“God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son”—that by debasing himself he might exalt our sinful nature to a state of salvation. “This is a faithful saying,” remarks an Apostle, “and worthy of all acceptance—that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” To acquire some faint notion of this great goodness towards us, we need only reflect, that no less a Being than God could have effected the merciful purposes intended by his becoming flesh.—Neither men, nor angels could have purchased the redemption of mankind; but our blessed Redeemer, by being God, was by his power able to save us,—and was competent by the Dignity of his person, and the Merit of his Services, to satisfy the justice of his offended Father.

A second reason might be this, that as man had transgressed the commands of the Almighty, and had thereby incensed that holy Being,—so Christ,—by being man, could obey, in the most perfect manner, the will of God, would give that proof of obedience, which was incumbent on man to pay, and restore that happiness, which had been forfeited by the fall of Adam,—or, in the language of scripture, “that as by one man's disobedience many

were made sinners,—so, by the obedience of one man, many should be made righteous.”

A third reason for Christ's assumption of the human nature might be,—to instruct mankind in truths essential to repentance. And a form better suited to that gracious purpose cannot be conceived than that, in which our Saviour condescended to appear, because in his earthly frame, which was a counterpart of our own, he could faithfully describe and represent an exact image of righteousness—shew in what manner we ought to behave to each other, and how subservient our unruly affections and appetites should be made to the will of our heavenly Father.

The Apostle to the Hebrews has given us a fourth reason for the incarnation of the Son of God. —“It behoved Christ,” said he, “to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make a reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

A fifth, and last reason which I shall attempt to produce, is derived from the awful character, in which our Lord will appear at the end of the world. In the day of judgment, by his divine nature as God, he will be able to discern the secrets and counsels of the heart,—and by his human nature, He will be visible and audible to surrounding nations and people,

without surprising, or terrifying the faithful—and be ready to screen them from the insupportable presence of his omnipotent and Holy Father.

Thus you perceive that although we are unable, because it is unnecessary, to explain the manner of our Lord's wonderful conception—still we are in possession of some very important ends, which his incarnation did effect. Many more there are, no doubt, unseen by us. Those, however, which the Almighty has enabled us to explore, are surely sufficient to illustrate and confirm the wisdom of the divine act. Let us, therefore, believe and acknowledge the adorable mystery.—Let us patiently and devoutly wait for that glorious period, when faith shall be turned into vision, when we shall see the incarnate God face to face, and be known by Him—and live with Him for ever.

According to the plan proposed I proceed now to remind you of some of the principal doctrines, which are implied under this article of our faith;—and, first, you may perceive “that our Lord was born of a woman.”—“God sent forth his Son,” saith Saint Paul “born of a woman,” “and, that holy thing,” declares the Angel to Mary, “which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”—Had infinite wisdom deemed any other way more proper, by which the ever-blessed Jesus should have become incarnate, it might, with the utmost facility, have been adopted,—but—as our blood was univer-

sally tainted by the transgression of Adam, it appears necessary, that it should be restored by the atonement of one, who was of our race and kindred, and, therefore, "God sent forth his Son, born under the law."—He was, also, made man to do honour to the one sex, and was born of a woman to exalt the other. As the woman was the unhappy means of bringing sin into the world—so woman became the blessed instrument of bringing salvation into the world and of taking away the reproach of her sex. God in the midst of judgment remembers mercy. "I will put enmity," was the gracious promise "between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We learn in the next place, that this woman was a spotless virgin. A circumstance, indeed, inexplicable and mysterious, but she, who was delivered of this son, was, in this respect, fully answerable to the predictions which had been written of her—"Behold a virgin shall conceive!" Had she not been the pure character she was foretold to be, and was declared afterwards to have been, the imposture would have been easily detected.—When, moreover, we recollect, that the Virgin Mary had Zachariah the Priest as an observer of her conduct during the first months of her pregnancy, had him, as a witness of her behaviour, who had publicly declared the miraculous birth of his own Son,—that she lived many years after the death of Christ, among his

professed enemies, to refute any malicious accusation that could be advanced against her,—and that the apostles preached this doctrine among eye-witnesses of her conduct, without its being disputed, or contested;—when, I say—we recollect all these particulars, we must conclude the unblemished virtue of her character to be an unanswerable evidence of the truth of our Lord's mission,—and, with the inspired writers, acknowledge him to have been born of a “pure Virgin,”

The Virgin, once again, who gave birth to the Messiah, was called “Mary”—and as minutely answered in her person and character to the other particulars relating to the Son of God, as that of her being a virgin corresponded with ancient prophecy.—She was, for instance, “espoused to Joseph,” who was born in “Bethlehem”—who lived in the city of “Nazareth” in Galilee, and who was of the house “and family of David.” She was of the same lineage as her betrothed husband, religious and devout towards God, humble and lowly in her deportment—“and highly favored among women.” In this distinguished point of view has sacred scripture transmitted her character to posterity, and, as the mother of our Lord, we may safely confess her to “be blessed among women.” But no farther can our acknowledgments safely be made. We have no authority to style her, as a corrupt church does, the Queen of Heaven,—to call her the spouse of

God, and make her the object of our prayers and adoration! Our Lord, indeed, seems expressly to have provided against this glaring impiety.—For, foreseeing how highly she would be ranked by the Romish church, He occasionally treated her with outward coldness and apparent neglect, denied her the right of commanding him as Son, who was her Lord, and more than once assured his disciples, that such persons, as carefully observed his precepts, were nearer to him than the ties of blood could make them, were in a more sublime and exalted degree allied to him, than any one could be from the mere claim of carnal relationship.

Thus, have I endeavoured to shew the authority, on which we confess that “Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.” Although clouds and thick darkness are round the throne of the Most High, and impenetrably conceal from the human sight the mysterious union of the two natures, yet, we are in possession of some of the most important purposes, which were accomplished by our Lord’s incarnation, and “visit of great humility.” I have, also, reminded you of the most leading points of Doctrine, which are implied under this article in the Apostles’ Creed. The length to which this important subject has led me, compels me to confine the practical part to a very few particulars, and may God impress them upon

our minds, and enable us to make "our calling and election sure."

Although, then, we are obliged to confess with Nicodemus, with respect to the unity of the divine and human nature, "how can these things be?"—still, it must be an object of our unfeigned and implicit belief, and for this plain and imperative reason,—because, it is contained in that most authentic rule of faith, that pure fountain of all sacred knowledge—that only revelation of the will of God to mankind, our BIBLE. It is not requisite that we should be able to fathom the nature and fitness of every article to which the Supreme Being requires our assent. If we are certain that the Revelation on which it is grounded, comes from Heaven, what more in our present sate, can we reasonably desire? It is, then, as much our duty to receive the doctrine conveyed, as it is to believe the plainest proposition that can be presented to our judgment. Saint Peter assures us—that the very angels of God, those ministering and beatified spirits, even they who surround the throne of the Lamb, and "desire to look into" this, and similar mysteries—dare not attempt it,—but view them, as deep and sacred truths, beyond their exalted comprehensions to receive. But what, alas! is ventured by ignorant and finite man,—in this boasted age of intellect and perfection. Man!—man, who was made at the creation lower than

the angels—and who became, by the fall of his first parents, still lower sunk—this degenerated creature, dares to invade the privileges of heaven—and when he fails in proof, from earthly similitudes—irreverently disputes, and boldly denies the sacred mysteries of our holy religion, and, at length, rejects the Revelation from on High.

The last inference I shall offer applies to our practice. Since God has stooped so low to raise us, and all his earthly children to the highest state of honor and glory—how fervently should we love love him, and how cheerfully should we obey his precepts, in testimony of our gratitude for his amazing love and condescension! As the only begotten Son of God left the bosom of his Father “for us men, and for our salvation”—and submitted to all the painful occurrences of humanity—we ought to submit, patiently, to every dispensation of his providence—As He descended from his kingdom of glory to become poor for our sakes, we should not consider any condition too hard, or painful that he may exact. And as He has given us so bright an example of love and charity, we ought to “do good unto all men, and to one another, as Christ has loved us!”

May the knowledge of this sacred mystery raise in you these holy dispositions! May they lead you to the throne of grace for strength and resolution to exemplify them in your future conduct! Then might I proclaim—as the angels proclaimed, at the

birth of Christ—"I bring you glad tidings of great joy!" "To you a Saviour is born." "Behold your God!" Yes, my christian brethren, behold your Redeemer—who has obtained for you pardon and immortal glory! Behold every enemy of your earthly happiness—sin—the world—and death—subject at your feet! Behold your future portion—a lasting and unembittered peace, which the world cannot give, or take away! Behold, what is still more essential—still more indispensable to your eternal felicity—at the final consummation of all things, the inexpressible satisfaction which you experience on earth, from sincerely endeavouring to do the will of God, shall be increased an hundred fold in the regions of immortal bliss!

THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST.

Acts 13th, 28th—partly.

“And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.”

THE portion of Scripture, which I have just recited, and which I have selected to illustrate that part of the Apostles' Creed, which relates to the unparalleled sufferings of our blessed Redeemer, occurs in the Sermon, which Saint Paul preached at Antioch by the desire of the rulers of the synagogue. Having solemnly addressed his numerous auditory, and requested their most serious attention, he details the many favors, which God has bestowed upon their nation, from their departure out of Egypt until the days of David his servant. Afterwards he shews them how the Almighty had raised unto Israel a Saviour, according to his promise, from that man's seed, and then relates the principal circumstances of our Redeemer's life, among which, is the solemn event recorded in the text, “that although the Jews found

no cause of death in Jesus Christ, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain."

From this authentic source, we learn these two important points of doctrine, which directly apply to the part of the creed, at which we are arrived, namely, that our blessed Lord was "crucified and slain," "and that he suffered under Pontius Pilate." My last lecture related to the conception and the birth of Christ,—the present will be engaged in the consideration of his sufferings. The one, indeed, very naturally, though painfully, succeeds the other, for the whole of the Messiah's life was a scene of sorrow and affliction. In this discussion it is not necessary to bespeak your attention, for the subject is of such a nature as to demand it,—but—I call upon you to implore with me the blessing of God—that from the knowledge of what Jesus Christ has done and suffered "for us men and for our Salvation," we may become better men and better Christians!

The two points of doctrine, to which we are to direct our present attention, are first—what is to be understood by the sufferings of Christ,—and secondly, under whom he suffered.

Now in your assent to this part of the Apostles' Creed you are supposed to believe, that the long expected Messiah, and only begotten Son of God, did suffer under Pontius Pilate. To prove this melancholy event,—to convince you that He, whom we acknowledge to be our Redeemer, did un-

dergo the ceremony of a mock trial,—that He was “buffeted—scourged—spit upon”—and, afterwards “crucified” between two thieves,—must be unnecessary, because, those ignominious circumstances were fully admitted to have happened by the Gentiles, and were boasted of, and triumphed in by the Jews,—and because, the annals of the times, in which our Saviour suffered, are public records of the facts, and which, no artful testimony can ever explain away, or, materially invalidate.

But, although it is unnecessary for these convincing reasons to authenticate the fact itself,—yet is it incumbent on the Preacher to relate those interesting particulars, which are comprised in this portion of our faith,—and, however painful the description of them may be to your feelings, they will represent, though imperfectly, the sorrows which our blessed Lord endured for us, and the weight of obligation which we are under to Him, for his death upon the Cross.

In the first place, then, our blessed Lord suffered as a criminal,—or, as our text expresses it —“though no cause of death was found in him, yet they desired Pilate that he should be slain.” Few things in life are so dear to us as an upright character. With the good opinion of the world we can support with fortitude the severest afflictions of poverty and the heaviest pressure of sickness, yea even of death itself. But, when appearances and

the voice of calumny sink us in the estimation of mankind, and that consoling companion in distress forsakes us, we frequently fall under the pressure of surrounding evils, and our sufferings become painful in the extreme. Now, if this be the case with frail man, how severely must the immaculate Son of God have suffered under the unjust ignominy, in which He quitted life? To know, my brethren, in what an hostile manner He was assailed as a "thief," by infuriated men, "with swords and staves,"—to read the malicious "charges" that were made against his sacred character,—to observe the "many false witnesses," who impiously laid to Him "things that he knew not," and acts which he had never committed,—to behold the Chief Priests and rulers of the people consuming the whole night in schemes to accomplish his destruction,—hurrying on his trial, and thinking that the morning clouds had too long delayed the execution of a distorted law,—to know that these things were done so undeservedly to him in Jerusalem by the very men whom He came to save—who could have believed it possible from the manner in which He was treated, that He was the same person, whose goodness of character, and whose works of infinite power and mercy had astonished the multitude, and spread abroad his fame? Who, indeed, could have supposed, that this was He, to whose consoling assurances thousands had listened with delight?—Whose precepts had inculcated

obedience to superiors, reverence to parents, and love to enemies, and whose divine influence had been exercised in curing the sick, feeding immense numbers of hungry and indigent persons, and in occasionally raising their very dead? Yes, indeed, let those who suffer under the false accusation of their brethren, or complain of the cruelty of their adversaries, let such judge of our Lord's sufferings, who, though sinless and unoffending, died like a notorious Malefactor, and underwent the execution of a sentence unusually severe, and which was wantonly extorted in opposition to all remonstrance, justice and truth.

Secondly, the ignominious manner in which the Son of God yielded up his innocent life, and finished the work that He came into the world to perform, may be ranked amongst the number of his sufferings. Having submitted to that mock trial—to those varied insults of the soldiers—to the “crown of thorns,” to all the tormenting indignities of his adversaries,—we behold him enduring a punishment, which was never inflicted upon free men, but only on slaves, who, in that part of the world and at that period of time, were scarcely considered as human creatures, and were treated with all the refinements of cruelty and malice.

Thirdly, the instrument of death, on which Jesus suffered, as the name imports, consisted of two pieces of wood, which crossed each other. On the one,

were the arms of the condemned person extended and his hands firmly nailed, and on the other, his feet were joined and fastened in the same torturing manner. Behold then, O sinner, your Redeemer stretched on his cross!—behold Him suffering the most painful death which could have been inflicted!—His limbs extended and penetrated with nails, his frame greatly weakened by his previous agony in the garden, his body exposed to public derision, and his side wantonly “pierced” by the insulting soldiers!—Behold! the only begotten Son of God,—the arbiter of life and death, who had been greeted as a virtuous monarch, and hailed by the general acclamations of the people, as the long promised Messiah—behold him, for three long hours enduring the pains of the cross, under circumstances peculiarly severe, and with the burden of all our sins upon Him—and you will have no hesitation in repeating this part of the Apostles Creed, “I believe that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate.”

Fourthly, such were our Lord’s outward sufferings—painful indeed, and unparalleled!—yet light—in comparison to those, that afflicted his soul. To observe them, in a different point of view to that in which we have hitherto considered them—let us look upon Him, as that innocent victim, on whom the sins of the whole world were laid, under the heavy displeasure of heaven, and completely satisfying the justice of his offended Father; and we shall have

before us fresh instances of his bitter sufferings, as well as of his infinite mercy to the fallen and guilty race of Adam.

Our first parents had forfeited the favour of God by their disobedience, and had entailed sin and death upon their miserable posterity—"for, in the day thou eatest thereof," said God, to Adam, "thou shalt surely die." Now, as a just God, this merited sentence must either have been executed,—or the offence must have been properly repaired. And where was the being to be found, who could completely atone for this enormous transgression, and, by the substitution of himself, restore the order, which the sinner had destroyed by his disobedience? Man had sinned, but man could not satisfy the justice of God. Although, however, the whole earth could not present such an acceptable sacrifice,—yet one was found in heaven—the Son of God, the appointed heir of all things, became the repairer of the violation done by the first man, and the reconciler of every sincere penitent to the heavenly Father. "For as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

In another suffering point of view has Isaiah represented our Lord in the following remarkable predictions, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." To trace the accomplishment of this sacred prophecy, I

must lead you again, my brethren, from the Cross to the garden of Gethsemane, where you will behold some of Christ's dreadful sufferings, in that eventful hour.

As soon as the time was come, in which our Saviour was to go to the Father, and after He had given his disciples those affecting instructions, which breathed so much of the parent and the friend,—and he had instituted the new passover, that last proof of his love to mankind, we find, that “he arose and went with his disciples to the mount of Olives.”—As the disciples were then but weak in faith, probably he spared them the affecting sight of his agony,—and withdrew “from them about a stone's cast,” where he kneeled down and prayed.—In that retired scene, for the last time, He entreated with his Father for the great mystery of man's redemption. There we see Him prostrate, with his face upon the earth,—there we view him accepting, in the presence of God, all the bitterness of the cup,—and we hear him, in the language of scripture, under which his voluntary sacrifice had been prefigured, addressing his heavenly Father and saying, “sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: Lo, I come to do thy will O God.” Then his soul became “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death!”—Then the justice of God began to regard him as a sinful man—and he was looked upon as a hostage of expiation—laden with the iniquities of the whole

world,—the devoted object on whom must fall all the severity of Divine vengeance against the numberless most heinous sins and abominations, which had ever been committed by mankind.

Our Lord's first mental suffering in that scene of his agony, may be said to have arisen from a retrospective view of the malignity of sin. In that sorrowful moment he perceived what confusion, what injustice, what pride, what corruption, what murders and curses had proceeded from that fatal source. He travelled through the disgraceful history of the universe, and nothing was unseen, from the blood of innocent Abel, to the last diabolical act that had been committed. He observed the monstrous superstitions that had been established in the world, how grossly the knowledge of the Supreme Being had been effaced, what incests had been committed, and how many altars had been profaned. No act of secret darkness had been perpetrated—no idol had been worshipped—no vice indulged, either in thought, or deed, which did not then appear before him, and give a keener edge to the sufferings he endured.—Our minds, too much engrossed by worldly and carnal things, are only affected by sensible objects. We regard with indifference the consequences attached to sin, and can behold our fellow-creatures committing offences which we know may destroy the peace of their immortal souls, with, or perhaps, even without a casual, a serious impression,—but,

in that painful moment our Redeemer saw, and felt all the sad and bitter consequences of guilt. He saw his pure and holy body—more pure and holy than all the host of celestial beings—stained with our iniquities.—“He who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,”—endured for us in the flesh, unknown sufferings, “that he might bring us unto God.”

Again. It was pride, which caused the expulsion of the angels from heaven, and it was the same base principle which operated on the mind of Eve, inflamed her with an improper desire of being wiser than her station required, and urged her to take and eat of the forbidden fruit. In order to repair this injury inflicted by the pride of sin, our Lord endured another mental suffering. He was covered with all the shame of sin, was humbled in the minds of his disciples, whom he often instructed and commanded, and had his fears, and his sorrows made, as it were, a public spectacle.—For, three times he came to his selected servants in great agony,—twice he declared “his soul to be sorrowful even unto death,”—and twice entreated them “to tarry with him, and watch,” and not to abandon Him in his necessity, and when he was sinking under the excess of that agony with which it pleased the Almighty to afflict Him.

What the sufferings of our Saviour were at that awful moment, we cannot, indeed, form any adequate idea—yet, from the manner, in which they are

recorded by the Evangelists, they must have been most dreadfully acute. They tell us—that his Humiliation was so great—his Agony so excessive—and his Sweat so copious, like unto great drops of blood falling to the ground, as to require the ministration of an angel—“there appeared,” says Saint Luke, “an Angel from heaven to strengthen him.”—Behold, here, then, my brethren, the abasement of our Redeemer! See his feeble, trembling, sorrowful, and almost expiring soul, in his human nature, supported by one, whose office, with other angelic spirits, is, to adore and serve the Lord of nature, and say “if there be any sorrow like unto the sorrow with which the Lord afflicted Christ in the day of his fierce anger.”

If to the sufferings, already mentioned, we add the agony of his Soul, when we beheld the punishment prepared for him, this part of our Creed will require no farther illustration. It is generally allowed, that the expectation of a torment, which appears inevitable and shortly to be inflicted, is more cruel and insufferable than the torment itself. Now, all the ignominious and painful parade of the cross—all the insults, which Christ was to receive in the palace—all the mockeries, buffetings, and reproaches of the rabble,—crucify beforehand the meek and suffering Lamb of God. In one point of view he beholds—and, at the same time, he suffers—under the “scourges”—the piercing of the “nails”—and the

anguish of the "spear." All his sorrows are united in the Garden of Gethsemane, and his soul, even before his crucifixion, is immersed in bitterness and tribulation, and little can we be surprised that, in his human nature, He should shrink under such accumulated pressure and pray, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." But whilst He suffers so intensely himself, his beloved disciples alas! seem unconcerned.—They sleep at the very moment, when He, their innocent Master, is wrestling with all the powers of Sin and Satan. This, however, is not the case, on Calvary, where the Lord of life was afterwards crucified,—for there the whole universe partakes of his sorrows. In his agony he suffers in darkness and in silence,—but, on the Cross, his very enemies confess him to be the Son of God. In the scene of his sorrows, his disciples sleep unconcerned,—but, as He gives up the Ghost "pious women" are weeping round him—and all nature unites to proclaim his Divinity. "For the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;—and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;—and the graves opened; and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

After this brief and feeble illustration of our Saviour's sufferings, for no human powers can correctly describe them, you will see, my brethren, the

propriety of acknowledging "that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, suffered under Pontius Pilate." Before, however, I lead you to the consideration of the second part of our subject, it may be necessary to observe—that Jesus Christ only suffered in his office, as the Messiah, and not in his person, as "God of God, and very God of very God." The prophet Isaiah, who has treated so largely of the sufferings of our Lord, as well as many other prophets, foretold most of those painful circumstances, which we have just considered. All the sufferings, moreover, which He endured were typified under several peculiarly strong images, such as by Isaac, the heir of promise, who bore the "wood," or cross, on which he was to suffer, and to be sacrificed,—by the "brazen serpent," which was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, and which denoted the salvation, that was to proceed from Christ's being lifted up on the cross, and by the "paschal Lamb," that very appropriate emblem of Christ our passover.

From these authorities, we clearly perceive, that the Son of God was to suffer in his sacred office,—but,—not in his divine nature;—for that spiritual part, which is common with the Father and the Holy Ghost; must have suffered with Him, if it had been the subject of his passion, which it is impossible to imagine. We believe, therefore, that Christ did really suffer for the redemption of mankind, not in his

Divinity, which was impassible—but, in his Humanity, which, in the days of his humiliation was made subject unto our infirmities—that he suffered in his body, by those external injuries, which were inflicted on him,—and in his soul, by those dismal agonies and by that inexpressible anguish, which are referred to in the narrations of the four Evangelists.

And thus instructed in the nature of our Saviour's sufferings, our Creed goes on to inform us under whom he suffered. And this particular is very properly added to the preceding one, for—as it was the ancient custom of the world to signify at what time any occurrence happened, by mentioning the person under whose government it came to pass,—so—by inserting into the Creed, that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea, future generations might inquire into the records of that age, in which this extraordinary event took place, and see the high and indisputable authority on which the fact is established.

The character of this Heathen Judge is marked with much singularity, and in a very striking manner confirms all that the sacred prophecies had predicted of him. Pilate was, for instance, a Gentile, an alien from the common wealth of Israel, and united with the Jews to do violence to the Son of God—"that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world appear guilty before God."—And he was also a stranger, that he might the better vindicate the in-

nocence of Christ, and have his assertion "of finding no fault in him" more readily received by future generations.

What an infatuated and inconsistent character does Pilate appear! What a conscientious, and yet, what an irresolute Judge! For a time, at least, he resisted all the clamour urged to crucify the Messiah, and would not yield to the fury of the populace, until he had minutely examined the charges which were preferred against his prisoner. Even, afterwards, when the voice of the multitude was suffered to prevail, and before he yielded to their clamour, he acknowledged that his conscience acquitted him. Nor was this all, for he came forward and expostulated with the people three separate times in his behalf, and when these strong representations, or remonstrances failed of their effect—"he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, and declared—that he was innocent of the blood of that just person."—Convinced of the injustice of our Lord's condemnation, certain of the innocency of his life, and persuaded of the malice of his enemies,—yet, he possessed not rectitude of heart, not firmness of conduct sufficient to resist the importunities of the Jews, and to save an innocent life. He released, therefore Barabbas unto them, and delivered up Jesus to be crucified. Infamous, indeed, and inconsistent was the conduct of this heathen Judge! But, behold, how the wisdom and providence of God overruled

the conduct of Pilate,—for, by passing sentence on Christ, he pronounced his own condemnation,—by declaring the innocence of the accused, he refuted the slanderous aspersions of the Jews,—by delivering up that sacred person to his accusers, he permitted them, as it was foretold, to crucify the Son of God,—by inscribing that title, in three different languages, on the cross, he actually became our Saviour's herald to proclaim to the Jews, "their King,"—and thus he, literally, fulfilled all that the Scriptures had revealed should be done to the Messiah.

Such infamy of conduct, however, usually meets with punishment of some description, or other, even in this present life—and the end of this corrupt character remarkably illustrates the assertion. For after enduring for a short time, a lingering and unhappy life, Pilate laid violent hands on himself. Being deprived of his government and banished with reproach, from the scene of his splendor and power, he felt all the horrors of his degraded situation, embittered, perhaps, with the compunctions of a guilty conscience, and within the period of five years from the crucifixion of our blessed Lord, in the agonies of despair, he destroyed with regard to this scene his miserable existence.

Would the time permit me, my brethren, I could explain the propriety of these painful circumstances happening to our blessed Lord, but as it is already far advanced, and as the subject may be very seasonably

connected with my next discourse, which will be upon the death and burial of Jesus Christ, I shall postpone all further explanation till the following sabbath.

In order to render our present meditations profitable, which is, indeed, the end of all scripture, we must recollect—that as the sufferings of our Lord were great, and painful beyond all example; what a prevailing inducement we have to be patient under affliction, and resigned to the will of God. The sufferings of our merciful Redeemer were the melancholy consequences of our guilt, and he voluntarily submitted to the displeasure of his heavenly Father to rescue us from everlasting condemnation. Surely, then, if “He bore the chastisement of our guilt, and if with his stripes we are healed,” we should behold him with the most ardent affection, and testify the strength of our love, by an obedience to his commands. Are any of you, then, my brethren, maliciously reviled? Is your reputation unjustly aspersed?—Does the hand of sickness press heavily upon you, or upon any of those dear objects, who are prized above your existence? Are your parents—your children—your friends—suddenly torn from you? or, from the course of nature, are they gradually returning to the dust from which they came?—Are there, from the evidences of declining health, but a few steps more between yourselves and the last event, that will concern you here?—Where, under these afflicting circumstances, where should your thoughts,

your hopes, your faith, repose, but on Jesus Christ! Whose example can you so properly follow, as the example of Him, who bowed his head in submission to his heavenly Father, and whose holy lips declared with firmness and fortitude, notwithstanding the extreme agony of his mind, "not my will, but thine be done."

After, through the grace of God, the preaching of the cross has produced these effects upon your conduct, let it prove, in other instances also, a powerful instrument of your salvation. "To the Jews it was a stumbling block"—and "to the Greeks foolishness;"—but let it be to you, as it was intended, the means of eternal happiness. Look upon the cross, and remember the enormity of sin, and its destructive consequences! Look upon the cross, and learn, that, as God spared not his only Son, He will extend no mercy to unrepenting sinners in the day of judgment! Yes, christians, look upon the cross, and, as the son of man was lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," let it lead you to the Father, through Jesus—that you may be benefited by his meritorious sufferings, and be made partakers of his glorious resurrection!—"For be it known to you, men and brethren, that though this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the

law of Moses." I pray you, therefore, "by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion," that henceforth "ye present your souls and bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF CHRIST.

Mark 15th, 44th and 45th Verses.

“And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the Centurion, he asked him, whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”

IN my last discourse upon the Apostles' Creed, were comprized the sufferings of our blessed redeemer and the character of the Judge under whom, at the instigation of the Jews, “although they found no cause of death in him, yet, the Lord of life was slain.” A third particular, you may remember my brethren, was left to be explained—namely—the necessity of those dreadful afflictions, which Christ endured in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the Cross. This point of doctrine, with the peculiar circumstances of his death and Burial, will form the subject of our present meditations. And God, of his infinite goodness, grant them energy and effect through Jesus Christ!

That no reasonable doubt should exist concerning the death of the long promised Messiah, and, aware

of the many artful attempts, that would be made by the Scribes and Pharisees, to remove from themselves the odium that would be excited by that mournful event, as well as, if possible, to invalidate the Divinity of the Person, who suffered,—we find the four evangelists relating the several particulars of His death and burial, with great fulness and perspicuity, and recording such a series of incidents, as must convince us of the truth of their narratives, and establish this important article of our faith in opposition to all the treachery, the scoffs, and impiety of its enemies.

Having followed the meek and suffering Lamb of God from the house, in which He had instituted the new passover, to the mount of Olives, where he was prostrate on the ground, under great anguish of body and mind,—having witnessed the deplorable weakness of his select disciples,—the treachery of Judas,—the denial of Peter,—and the base desertion of those “who forsook Him, and fled;”—having listened, with anxious suspense, to the false evidence that was collected against him,—having heard his unjust sentence,—seen the insults of the tumultuous rabble, and been heart stricken and deafened with the cries of “crucify Him—crucify Him;”—having, as it were, been witnesses of these degrading circumstances,—we followed the blessed sufferer, unable to bear his own cross, from the exhaustion of the preceding night,—a night passed without sleep, without food,

and with great loss of blood,—we followed Him, attended by a vast multitude, many of whom shed tears, and bitterly bewailed the severity of his unmerited “sorrows,”—we followed Him, to Mount Calvary, where the Soldiers, who were appointed to the office, made the usual preparations to erect the instrument of punishment and death;—and, at length, we beheld the only begotten Son of God and long expected Messiah nailed to the cross by Sinners, and crucified by those, whom he came into the world to redeem and save. Well may we exclaim with the Prophet, “Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O earth, the Lord hath nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him.”

During his suspension on the cross, several circumstances occurred, which greatly increased our Saviour’s sufferings, and tend to excite our surprise. A “title, or accusation,” was placed over his head, which was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, that foreigners as well as natives, might know who was condemned, and who it was that suffered like a criminal. The Soldiers, also, those executioners of the unjust sentence, contended for his garments as they did for those of common malefactors, and left the Messiah to expire without a covering, and to suffer, at once, the most ignominious, as well as the most painful death. His companions on the cross were men of notoriously infamous lives;—one of whom, blasphemously reviled Him, even with the last breath.

he drew, thereby affording a melancholy instance, how little the sense of shame—the infliction of exquisite torture,—or, even the prospect of eternal torments can prevail upon the heart of a resolute and hardened sinner.

But the other, whose untimely end was also hastened by the iniquity of his conduct, was mercifully converted, and exhibited a wonderful instance of the miraculous grace of God. This is not, however, an influence to be ordinarily expected. It is not an exertion of free and divine compassion upon which we are warranted to depend. We have no reason to conclude from it, that God will turn our hearts in an instant, at the hour of death, if we have neglected “to work out our Salvation” all the days of our life.—It is an extraordinary instance of the efficacious power of the heart-changing grace of God. We find no other example recorded of this nature,—one only has been given, that no soul should be left to despair—and but one, that no soul should be induced to presume.

Soon after the occurrence of these mortifying events, there followed the indignant expressions of the multitude—whose opinions, generally hasty and misled, had been prejudiced against Christ, by the malice and falsehood of the rulers of the people. Whilst some of them “that passed by, railed on him, wagging their heads and saying—Ah thou, that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days,

save thyself and come down from the cross,"—others, whom his agony had fixed to the spot, stood beholding—and with the Chief Priests and Scribes derided him, saying—"he saved others; himself he cannot save.—If He be the King of Israel let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him."—And the Soldiers, also, mocked him—saying—"if thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself."

How reproachful, my brethren, were these transactions to both Jews and Gentiles! And how forcibly do they illustrate the little dependance that is to be placed upon popular applause! Had not the fact been established upon records, that will long outlive the world in which we live, who could have believed that the very person whom the multitude so inhumanly derided, was He, who had displayed such uncommon love to his inveterate enemies,—whose perfect innocence had been pronounced by a heathen judge,—whose kind offices had excited the frequent admiration of the common people,—and whose instructive lessons had been received with such singular pleasure and success? Let these considerations lead us "to set our affections on things above."—To strive to obtain "the one thing needful," and to despise the perishable goods of this life, which, at the best, are but of uncertain tenure, and unsatisfactory in their enjoyment.

We find that soon after these blasphemous reproaches had been uttered, there appeared, on a sudden,

an alteration in the face of nature ! At noonday, an uncommon darkness covered Judea and the neighbouring parts, which prevailed until Jesus had given up the Ghost. What hopes and fears!—what terrors and amazement must have been created by that extraordinary circumstance during so long a space ! His disciples, ignorant of the necessity of their Master's death, perhaps concluded, that this awful change in the order of nature was preparatory to the immediate descent of Christ from the cross, “ to take vengeance on his enemies,” and, by the same fond expectations, probably, were his mother, and his mother's sister, and Mary Magdalene, and the beloved disciple, drawn nearer to the spot on which he suffered.—But—what must have been the conjecture of his accusers and murderers ! They had heard the consolations that He had given to his weeping friends,—they had seen Him tenderly commit his dejected mother to the care of the disciple whom He loved,—they had heard Him cry with a “ loud voice,” unusual to a person enfeebled by repeated suffering, and thereby proving that He did not die according to the ordinary course of nature, but rather as a conqueror over death than conquered by death, in testimony of the willing sacrifice of his spotless life, “ Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,”—and they had seen Him “ bow down his head and give up the Ghost !” As these events somewhat closely succeeded each other, the minds of his

enemies might have been too much occupied with feelings of an unamiable nature to ponder on the enormous malignity of the crime that they had committed,—but, when they heard our Lord exclaim “it is finished,”—when they saw the “veil of the temple rent in twain,—the earth quaking,—the graves opening,—and the bodies of men arising from their tombs,”—when they witnessed all the alarming convulsions of nature, they must have been struck with the keenest remorse, and, when it was too late to remove the cause that had occasioned it, must have considered all these prodigies as testimonies of the innocence, and incontestable evidence of the Divinity of our blessed Lord. And, indeed, thus they felt—and, in this manner, they did regard them. For Saint Luke says, “all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned,”—and Saint Matthew writes, “that the Centurion and they that were with him feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God.”

Previous to his burial, there happened several circumstances to prove, that our Lord did really undergo the same death, to which we are all subject by the transgression of Adam. As the Jewish law prohibited the bodies of those who were hung, from remaining all night upon the tree,—and as the sabbath was at hand, which pressed for the removal of so unseemly a spectacle, the Jews besought Pilate,

that the legs of the three crucified persons should be broken, in order to hasten their dissolution, and to conform to the intention of their law. The favor was granted and the direction given. But the soldiers appointed to execute the commission, perceiving that Jesus "was dead already"—broke not his legs, though they had broken the legs of the others,—but one of them, "with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." Had the conjecture of the soldier been wrong, of His being dead, this violence would have occasioned our Saviour's death—but, the water straining from his wound, ascertained the important fact, and consequently confirms the strict propriety of annexing this article to the sufferings of Jesus Christ in our Creed,—in order to acknowledge his dying for the sins of mankind, and to prevent the propagation of any fanciful and heretical opinions concerning this important point of a Christian's faith.

Towards the close of the evening of the day, on which our Lord was crucified, application was made to Pilate for the body of Jesus, by a person of considerable eminence among the Jews, either with respect to his birth, or his rank in life, who had been present at the execution. But before the favor was allowed, another evidence was given that our Lord was really dead.—For, observes the evangelist in our text—"Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him,

whether he had been any while dead—and, when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”—And thus, my brethren, as Isaiah had prophesied—“the Messiah was cut off out of the land of the living, and had his grave with the wicked.”—As Daniel, also, had predicted, “he was cut off, but not for himself, after threescore and two weeks.” And it was upon this conclusive evidence, that the disciples preached, that Christ was, “by wicked hands crucified and slain,”—not only in places that were remote and far distant from Jerusalem, and among men, who were unconnected with, perhaps unconcerned in the event, but even in that city and theatre of bloodshed itself, and before those very men, who stirred up the people to crucify the Lord of life and glory.

The next article in the Apostles' Creed to which our belief is to be given, is to that of our Saviour's burial,—and, in this particular, there is nothing, considered by itself, uncommon, for buried the body of the crucified Jesus would have been, had He not appeared the extraordinary person which he so truly was. The Jews had public sepulchres, in which criminals were interred, and where the instruments, which were used upon the occasion were also deposited—and thus, in the common course of things, would the body of our Redeemer naked and pierced, have found a place of interment from the fury of its adversaries, had not some friendly hand consigned

it to the silent tomb. But, among the several prophecies relating to the death and burial of Christ, there was the following remarkable circumstance to be fulfilled, namely, "that He was to make his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Now, that this scripture also might be fulfilled—"there came a man of Arimathea, named Joseph, an honorable counsellor, a good man and a just, who also himself waited for the kingdom of God, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews."—This man came, and "went in boldly unto Pilate," and besought him that he might take away the body of Jesus—and Pilate gave him leave and commanded the body to be delivered.—In discharging this last duty to his divine Master Joseph was assisted by another convert, named Nicodemus, the ruler, who formerly came to Jesus by night. By these two men was the body of the Lord taken, with becoming decency from the cross, "wrapped in a clean linen cloth," and carried to the place of its interment,—which was a "new sepulchre, hewn out in a rock" that belonged to Joseph, in a garden near to the spot in which Christ had been crucified. In that secure receptacle of mortality was it placed—and there it could be guarded by the attendant and vigilant soldiers. In that unoccupied retreat the lifeless remains of the judge of quick and dead were laid,—and there were they expected to crumble into dust and to add one more instance of corruption

to those which had been already effected either by the sure, though slow and silent decay of nature, or hastened by the hand of public justice, or of private violence and wrong. "And Joseph laid him in a new sepulchre, which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And the chief priests made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch."

From remarking the manner in which the four evangelists have related the two particulars inserted in the Apostles' Creed—namely, the death and burial of our blessed Lord, I proceed to remind you of the necessity that existed for such dreadful sufferings.—

In the first place, it was expedient that Christ should die for the sins of the world—because it was the result of God's eternal counsel and decree. In perusing the new Testament, it must have often occurred to you, my brethren, how desirous the four evangelists appear to make their readers sensible, that all the circumstances of our Lord's sufferings and death were pre-ordained of God. They assure us, that Jesus was a lamb "slain from the foundation of the world"—and that we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." Do the multitudes, then, come out "with swords and staves" to take Him?—This was done, that the

scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled. Is his innocent person "covenanted for" and sold by a traitorous disciple? "Then was fulfilled, that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, and they took thirty of the pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the Potter's field." Do they cast lots for his garments? This was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet—"they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."—Is Christ crucified between "two thieves?" Then was the scripture fulfilled, which saith, "he was numbered amongst the transgressors." Does a spear "pierce" his side, and testify his death, while the bones of the two malefactors are broken? These things were done, for it had been declared,—“not a bone of Him shall be broken:” or, is He laid in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea? This accomplished the saying—"that He should be with the rich in his death." And, if you will add the two following declarations of our Lord to the preceding proofs, you will clearly perceive that the sufferings and death of Christ were not casual occurrences, and suddenly devised,—but were the result of God's eternal counsel,—contrived by divine wisdom, and resolved upon by infinite goodness, to repair the offence, which was occasioned by Adam, and to place his posterity in a capacity of salvation.—The first is this, "let

these sayings" said Christ, long before he suffered, "sink down into your ears, for the son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him." And the second is, "the son of man goeth, as it is written of Him"—that is, as it is elsewhere expressed, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Thus, my brethren, you find, both from scripture, and from our Lord's own words, "that it behoved Christ to suffer."

In the next place, although his death was attended with such painful and ignominious circumstances, yet it was necessary and admirably calculated to produce the most beneficial consequences. His death, indeed, was painful and ignominious—but, it was such, as He had declared it should be. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the son of man be lifted up," signifying by what death he should die. Had, therefore, His death been attended with pomp and worldly splendour—how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? Notwithstanding, however, Christ's death was painful and ignominious, yet, it had sufficient testimony from above to convince every unprejudiced mind, that it was designed for some peculiar and dignified purpose. For, as I have before observed, extraordinary and supernatural signs were given from heaven to shew the infatuated Jews his innocence, and, an universal darkness prevailed over Judea and the adjacent parts, to indicate, that the sun of righteous-

ness had withdrawn, for a time, his benignant rays from the land of Israel, and had suffered a temporary eclipse, in order to shine with additional splendour in the Gospel ministry of his Apostles. And his death, though ignominious, was public.—At a time, when the Jews of all nations were collected together in crowds to celebrate the passover, at Jerusalem. Indeed, a religion, which was to be preached from one extremity of the earth to the other,—and an Example, which was to be generally adopted, ought not to have been given privately, or exhibited in a corner,—and, therefore, as the Son of God had visibly and publicly professed, that He came from heaven to establish a system of faith, which would afford rest and comfort to the souls of the weary, and direct mankind in what manner they should best worship the Almighty God;—so He died visibly and publicly, that the events, which were to the “Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness,” might prove to posterity, “the power and the wisdom of God.”

And this leads me to observe lastly,—that the death of Christ was necessary, because it materially concerned the three sacred offices, in which He was destined to appear. As a “prophet,” for instance, it behoved our Lord to die—for, by his death, he confirmed all the doctrines that he had delivered, and by his blood, he sealed the truth of the New Testament, or everlasting covenant,—“for,” writes

Saint Paul, "where a testament is, there must of necessity be also the death of the testator."

As a "priest" too, it was requisite for our Lord to die. "For every High Priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin."—Now all mankind had sinned, and, therefore, had offended the justice of God, and by an act of that justice, the sentence of death had passed on Adam and his posterity. The blood of bulls and of goats, however, could not take away, or remove the penalty of the transgression.—By the precious blood of Christ alone, "as a Lamb without spot, or blemish," could the redemption of the world be purchased. It was, therefore, necessary, that Christ our passover should be slain for us.—And by that willing sacrifice, "we now have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new living way, which he has consecrated to us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh."

And as "a king" it behoved our Lord to suffer. What Pilate had written—either by a divine impulse, or from a worse influence, was literally accomplished by the death of Jesus upon the cross. For there the divine sufferer not only proved himself to be the King of the Jews, but the sole Lord of universal nature—the Sovereign of all things visible and invisible. "Having spoiled principalities and powers," says the Apostle, "he made a shew of them openly,

triumphing over them in it,"—that is in, and by his cross; "and through his death, destroyed him that had the power of death—that is the Devil." "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord of the dead and the living."

These are some of the principal reasons, which are collected from the word of God, to establish the necessity for the sufferings and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Although they have not been so numerous, or so forcibly stated, as they might have been, yet, I hope, they are sufficient both in number and effect, to create in you an earnest desire to make them the subject of your frequent and serious meditation. The more you contemplate these heavenly truths, the more plainly will you perceive, and acknowledge the great love of God towards miserable sinners, the more forcibly will you feel the enormity of all manner of iniquity, the more will you be inclined to love the Lord, with all your heart and all your soul, and the more fearful will you become to commit any act, similar to those, to make atonement for which, so great and meritorious a sacrifice was required.

At this point we close that part of the Apostles' Creed, which relates to the life, sufferings, death and burial of the Son of God. In considering these deeply interesting and important subjects, we have seen, that our Lord's first appearance was attended

with a mean birth and narrow circumstances—that his education was suitable to his unpromising condition—that He had no form, nor comeliness;—and was “a man of sorrows—and acquainted with grief.” We have seen, that He fell a victim to the malice and rage of an infuriated people—and, was placed in the new sepulchre, which a rich man of Arimathea had prepared for his own interment. To this period we have brought our Saviour’s painful history. In the tomb appear to have been laid all the hopes of his timid disciples, and all remembrance of the miracles, and the mighty works that He had wrought among them. “They were,” indeed, “slow of heart to believe all the things that the Prophets had written concerning Christ.”

But from this period of our Saviour’s life, a brighter prospect displays itself.—And as we now advance, we shall have to contemplate all the animating and inestimable consequences of his stupendous sacrifice. We shall find—“that the Holy one was not suffered to see corruption”—that He came forth from the bosom of the Earth, with great glory—having subdued the powers of darkness and of death—and that He now sitteth at the right of God from whence He will come, at the end of the world, to judge both the quick and the dead.”

If then, my beloved brethren, you desire to have the crucified Jesus your Redeemer and Intercessor with his heavenly Father—you must be careful

that you do not, by a wicked and unchristian course of life, "crucify Him afresh, and put him to open shame." You must pray fervently to God, that the knowledge of these truths may inflame your love to Christ, may strengthen your faith in the promises of his Gospel, may improve your goodwill towards mankind,—and you must contemplate, as often as you are invited "the memorials of his death and passion" at the footsteps of his holy altar. If these things be done, with an honest and good heart, if, conscious of your own weakness and unworthiness, you prostrate yourselves before Christ in prayer for these essentials to salvation—the most animating prospects will open to your sight. You will behold the vail of the temple rent in twain—you will see the partition wall between your offended God and yourselves broken down—you will behold the powers of darkness conquered—a complete victory obtained for you, by the blood of the lamb—the sting of death removed,—and mansions of happiness prepared for you around the throne of God!

But, if these glorious assurances do not affect your hearts—for God's sake! for the sake of your own immortal souls! consider what you have to apprehend. Your imminent danger may be learned from the words of an Apostle, and if they have not the power to rouse you from your fatal security, mine must inevitably fail. "If you sin wilfully, after you have received the knowledge of the truth, there

remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but, a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of Christ."

The subject in which we are engaged, has prevented me from noticing the changes of the season, in the way, that I should otherwise of done. Before, however, I conclude, with those congratulations that are warm upon every tongue, at the opening of the early year, I beg to mingle mine, as a friend and fellow traveller to the same final home—and as a minister of our pure religion. I pray that the advancing year may prove one of temporal and spiritual happiness to you all! May the Almighty bless and prosper your undertakings! May he protect your substance from diminution—your families from misfortune—your bodies from sickness—and your souls from guilt!—You, around me who are young, "remember your Creator in the days of your youth." You that are aged, prepare for your last change, that you may "finish your earthly course with joy." May we all have wisdom to improve our time, and be grateful for the continued mercies of God, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

THE
DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HELL.

Acts 2, 31.—partly.

“ His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

AT the conclusion of my last discourse on the Apostles' Creed, the body of our blessed Redeemer was left in the tomb secured by a great stone, sealed with a seal, guarded by soldiers, the only inmate of that friendly sepulchre, which Joseph of Arimathea had provided for his own interment, and in which, were apparently consigned together with it, all the hopes of his timid and dejected disciples, and all the fond expectations which the mistaken and ambitious multitude had formed of his regal state and earthly power.

As Christ took upon him our nature, and was clothed with our infirmities, sin only excepted, so He endured all the miserable consequences, which were entailed upon the children of Adam, by the transgression of their first parents. He was, for

instance, hungry and thirsty, faint and weary, in fearfulness and trembling, in pain and sorrow, and subject to the power of the last enemy. His Spirit, as ours will be when we shall have reached the limit of our earthly pilgrimage, was separated from his Body,—and his Body was consigned to the large assembly of all men living—as ours, also, will be,—when that animating principle, by which it is now directed, has left it without consciousness and without motion.

After the death and burial of our blessed Lord, the Creed proceeds to present another point of doctrine, and reminds us that “He descended into hell.” Although this article was not so anciently used, as the several preceding ones were—it is, nevertheless, a sacred and important truth, that is taught in holy scripture, and that has been acknowledged, for the space of sixteen hundred years, as a part of the doctrine, which the Apostles preached, and to which they gave their faith. If, my brethren, I recite to you the high Authority, on which it is made an article of our belief, and afterwards explain the sense, in which you are to receive it, I trust, I shall promote the object of your present meditations, and, with the blessing of God, enlarge your knowledge of divine truth.

Now the authority, on which our Saviour’s descent into hell is made a part of the Christian faith, is the very best that we can possess ; for it is derived

from, and founded upon the indisputable testimony of a divine revelation. On this particular of the Apostles' Creed, there have been many proofs brought forward—more, indeed, than can be easily adverted to, in the usual limits of a discourse. However, after you have heard, and attended to the three following, which are deemed of unquestionable validity, you will probably require no further evidence of the doctrine under consideration.

The first authority is, that of Saint Paul to the Ephesians.—“Now that He ascended,”—says the Apostle—“what is it but that he descended also first, into the lower parts of the earth?” By this reference we perceive that the words, and the terms used by the Apostle, come very near to those, which are introduced into the Creed.

The next authority is from the first general Epistle of Saint Peter, in which is contained the following expressive passage.—“Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit: by which, also, He went and preached unto the Spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” In this sacred revelation we have not only our Lord's descent acknowledged, but also the power declared, by which it was effected, namely,

by that Spirit, by which, in the days of Noah, Christ preached unto the disobedient,—and by the power of which He was raised from the dead. “He was crucified through weakness” saith Saint Paul, “yet He liveth by the power of God.”

The third, and indeed the plainest authority is contained in the words of my text, in which Saint Peter assures us—“that his soul,” that is the soul of Jesus Christ—of him, whom the Jews had taken “and by wicked hands had crucified and slain”—“was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.” What renders this authority so very convincing, is, that it contains a direct reference to a prediction concerning our Lord, which was pronounced by his servant David, from whose loins he was to spring, after the flesh, and who had prophesied of Christ’s incarnation, sufferings and resurrection, as well as of his descent into hell.”——“Ye men of Israel,” says the Apostle, “hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God raised up—having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible, that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord alway before my face, for he is on my right

hand that I should not be moved : therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad—moreover, also, my flesh shall rest in hope : because, thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.”—After this reference to the prophecy of David concerning the Messiah, Saint Peter proceeds to reason upon it, by saying—“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn unto him with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne : he, that is David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.”

After this prophecy of the inspired Psalmist, and the application of it so precisely, and so distinctly directed by the Apostle, every impartial mind must admit the propriety of Christ's descent into Hell being made an article of our faith and inserted into our Creed.

As from the earliest ages, the construction of the word which is rendered Hell, has been a subject of much disputation—I shall, before I proceed to offer you an explanation of the sense in which it is to be received, briefly state its literal meaning. The word then, translated Hell is borrowed from Greek deri-

vation, and signifies the invisible receptacle, or mansion of the dead ;—not the place of the damned, as the word Hell is usually intended to signify, but the unseen world of departed spirits whether of torment, or happiness, into which the soul, immediately on its separation from the body goes, and there remains till it shall be recruited at the day of resurrection.

Proceed we now to the illustration of the sense, in which we are to receive this expression.—Of our Lord's descent into the bowels of the earth, you perhaps will say, my brethren, we are certain,—but we are not so well satisfied with respect to the place into which He descended. Deeply is it to be deplored, that, either from want of due attention to biblical knowledge—or, from interested motives, numberless erroneous conjectures have been formed and maintained with the blindest zeal regarding the soul, or spirit of our blessed Lord, during the interval between his death and resurrection. When I have mentioned the most prevailing opinions upon the subject, I shall offer to your attention, such an interpretation of the passage, as, I humbly trust, will be consistent with the meaning of the Creed, and conformable to those doctrines, which the Apostles received from their Divine Master, and which they continued to preach during their ministry upon earth.

Some, then, have imagined that our Saviour descended into that place of torment, which is fre-

quently called Hell, in sacred scripture, and into which they assert, that it was needful for Him to enter, in order to render his satisfaction complete, by undergoing, in his own person, the very same sufferings, which were due to those, for whose sins He became a propitiation. To such an abode, however, the soul of the blessed Jesus could not possibly pass, because, from the nature of things, it was impossible for our Lord to undergo the torments of the wicked—for, as the sting of their punishment is the “worm that dieth not,” so, such a distressful circumstance could never have happened to the beloved Son of God, “who had done no sin, neither had guile been found in his mouth.”

Others, again, have supposed, that our Lord descended into Hell, not to suffer any thing, but to deliver mankind, and to open the doors of a prison, where the souls of all good men were confined, who had existed upon earth before the time of our Saviour’s coming into the world.

This opinion must be erroneous also,—because, holy writ assures us—“that where the tree falleth, there will it lie,” that the souls of the righteous are in paradise, where “the dead who die in the Lord rest from their labours”—and that there is no redemption for such, as die impenitent, and under the displeasure of their God.

They, who imagine that during the time our Lord’s body remained in the sepulchre, He descended

into the regions of the wicked,—“and preached unto the spirits that were in prison”—ground their opinion upon that passage of Saint Peter, which you will find in the third chapter of his first Epistle. But such an interpretation is deemed improper, for the most acute and most learned commentators understand by “those in prison” the Gentile world, which was in captivity to sin and Satan, held in the chains of lust and in the bond of iniquity. And to perceive how properly such as are in that miserable condition, may be said to be in prison, the prophet Isaiah used the same phrase, as the apostle did, when he prophesied of the preaching of the gospel by Jesus Christ. “I give thee for a covenant unto the people,” says the inspired writer—“for a light to the Gentiles: to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison, and them that sit in darkness, out of the prison house.”—Again he says, “I will give thee for a light unto the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth, that thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth;”—and, again, “the spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim liberty to the captives—and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

Those persons, who lived before the flood, in the time of Noah, were as completely in prison, as those were who lived at the time of Christ's appearance in the flesh,—and that—on a twofold account. In the first place, they were in prison by reason of their

bondage to sin “for all flesh had corrupted their ways,” writes Moses—“their wickedness was great upon earth—and every imagination of their heart was to do mischief continually.” And, in the second place, they were in prison, because they had received the sentence of destruction from God, if they did not repent, within a hundred and twenty years.—For, said the Almighty, “my spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh—yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”

Now, in the period of time spoken of by the Apostle, Jesus did truly preach unto them by his Spirit. For He preached unto them, while the long suffering of God waited for them, before the flood, by Enoch, the seventh prophet from Adam; and he preached also unto them, by Noah, that teacher of righteousness, who, by preparing the ark before their very faces, in obedience to God’s command for his own preservation, did thereby condemn the world and cause them to anticipate their own destruction. And those disobedient spirits, who were, at that time, in the prison of their lusts—by not hearkening unto Noah, who spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, and from not profiting by the judgments, that had frequently been displayed before them, are “now in prison,” as well as they were at the time of our Lord’s descent into hell—“where they are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great and eternal day.”

This, I believe to be the safest interpretation of the much controverted passage of Saint Peter, and which condemns the fanciful notion of Christ's preaching unto the souls in their place of torment, between the interval of his death and resurrection. However long you may have considered the comment on this portion of scripture, yet it is not without considerable utility. It leads us to reflect how many, and what serious evils may arise to the unlearned, or the unthinking among us, who lend an ear to those persons, who undertake to be scribes and expounders of the law, without having first obtained the necessary acquirements for that sacred office;—and it proves how improper it is, to speak in the mildest language, for any set of men to torture the holy scriptures, in order to give an opening to controversies, which can never be of any real value, but which will lead enthusiastic minds, in this age of scepticism and infidelity, to imagine themselves “wise above that which is written.”——

The Romish church, alas! strongly illustrates this melancholy truth, and leads us to conclude, that if she could introduce and maintain for centuries, the strange and unwarrantable doctrine of purgatory, from the passage which has been just explained, which doctrine is—“that there exists a place in the next world, a purgatory, or middle state, in which the souls of imperfect christians suffer the pains due to the sins, for which they have not satisfied in this

life, and are helped by the prayers of the faithful,—if such an absurd doctrine, I say, could have been introduced and made an article of belief in the Romish church, from this passage of scripture,—heresies of a similar, or more destructive nature may creep in, through improper and ungodly teachers, and destroy the purity, and, at length, the very existence of our christian faith.

The sacred Scriptures are plain and instructive concerning our Lord's ministry upon earth. They assure us, that Jesus Christ preached salvation to all men,—that He offered eternal happiness to such, as with true faith and penitence turn unto him,—that He denounced eternal condemnation against those who rebelled against his heavenly Father,—and that, by his Obedience he merited, and by his innocent Blood he purchased a redemption for us from all future sorrow, in a scene of perfect and immortal happiness. But, whilst the divine writings unfold these blessed and important truths, they are wholly silent respecting an intermediate state of pain, or torment,—and, therefore, it is a doctrine not only not supported, but wholly repugnant to the word of God, which declares the death of Christ to be a “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of all mankind.”

It is recorded that, not many ages since, an eminent Philosopher reckoned up the various opinions, which had been formed respecting the nature of

true happiness, and that he found them to amount to the large number of one hundred and twenty. And were it possible for us to attend the several places of worship, the members of which unhappily dissent from the established Church, and to collect the fanciful, and, in some instances, I must say, though, I trust, with all Christian charity, the blasphemous doctrines which are there delivered, either from ignorance, from want of opportunity, or ability to investigate their real meaning, or, from loving the praise of men,—we should find their number far exceeding the result of the Philosopher's inquiry, or, perhaps, any other estimate that we may be at present inclined to suspect.

A third opinion concerning our Lord's descent into hell, has been this—that he descended into the place appointed for the final punishment of the wicked, in order to triumph over Satan and his kingdom in the dominions of despair. But this opinion is, also, very repugnant to sacred scripture,—because the devil and his angels are not yet confined to the pit of destruction, nor are they to be bound in chains, until the final judgment. The kingdom of Satan, of which such frequent mention is made by our blessed Lord and his Apostles, refers to the prevalence and dominion of sin, in this world—and, it is in this world, that Christ triumphs over Satan and his instruments, by converting men from darkness to light,—from the commission of unrighteous

deeds and the influence of wicked thoughts, which are the works of the devil, to the practice of virtue, goodness, temperance, chastity, and truth, which are the fruits of the spirit of grace, and which tend to the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth.

There is one more opinion attached to the word hell, in the Creed, and which appears to be as erroneous as the other three,—namely, that it signifies our Lord's departure to that place, under ground, which is called the grave, where the body moulders into dust, and becomes the food of worms. This, indeed, cannot be the meaning of the word, for then, there would be an useless and superfluous repetition in our formulary of faith,—because we have previously professed, that we believe, that Christ died and was buried.

These, my brethren, are the four principal opinions, which have been formed respecting our Lord's descent into hell—first, that he went into the place of torment, to render his satisfaction for the sins of the world full and complete;—secondly, that he descended to preach to the spirits in prison;—thirdly, that he subdued the power of Satan in his own dominion;—and, lastly, that he descended into the grave, the common receptacle of exhausted and motionless matter. All these opinions, we have seen, are repugnant to that, which the divine revelation intended to convey. In what sense, then, you

will naturally inquire are we to understand the expression? The answer is this,—when you acknowledge with the minister and the congregation, that “the son of God descended into hell,” you are supposed to mean no more than—that after death, our Lord’s body was placed in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea,—and that his spirit went into the invisible state, where other good spirits rest, and continued there during the appointed time, that is, till his resurrection—an interpretation, which seems to be justified by that expression of our blessed Redeemer himself to the penitent thief upon the cross,—“to day, shalt thou be with me, in paradise”—which clearly implied, that our Lord himself was to be in that happy state, here called Paradise—“where the dead, that die in the Lord, rest from their labours.”

In this part of our Saviour’s sacrifice for sin, we may observe, by way of improving the subject before us, with what exactness Christ condescended to conform to the sentence passed upon Adam, and his posterity. For he felt the pains of death—his soul was separated from his body—and he went into the other world in the similitude of a sinner, where the souls of the departed are reserved for the general judgment,—but—“as there was no sin in him,” and, as he had made full satisfaction for the sins of all mankind, which he took upon himself—his Father would “not leave his soul in hell,” or, in the place of de-

parted spirits, but raised it, without having seen corruption. What a superiority was here, over the condition of the first Adam! The first Adam gave the Ghost, and his body was soon changed into dust and corruption, and speedily mingled with the materials from which it came. But the second Adam, over whom sin had no power, did not remain long under the dominion of death—but overcame the last enemy and conquered him even in his own territories, the grave.”

We may, also, remark, that as our blessed Saviour dignified the several ages of man's life, through which he passed, and that as his soul, after undergoing the necessary separation from the body, rose from the dead—so, every devout spirit may find consolation in passing through the most painful scenes of life, and, be able to meet the stroke of death “in the sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection.” After what our Saviour has endured and accomplished, where is the cause for us to dread? Why should our spirits be unreasonably agitated? Why should we become miserable, and without confidence under any approaching visitation? At God's own good time, our souls will be rescued—as our Saviour's was, from the power of the grave.—And then, as the Apostle exultingly exclaims, “shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting?—O grave where is thy victory?” The sincere and contrite

sinner, then, may be now said literally to lay down his life in confidence of a blessed immortality, and to resign his soul into the hand of his Redeemer. The state is now revealed, to which such, "as abound in the work of the Lord" are assigned, as soon as the breath of life leaves the clay it animates. A time is now declared, when the re-union of all pious and repentant Christians will take place. When all tears shall be wiped from the eye, all traces of sorrow dried from the cheek, and when all the effects of grief and mourning shall be effaced from every heart!—May your souls and mine, my brethren, enter that blissful state into which the spirit of our Redeemer went, previous to the judgment at the last day! And, that we may be hailed to a still more perfect state of blessedness, at the final consummation of all things, be it our constant endeavour to obey the will of our eternal lawgiver and divine Master! Be it, also, our constant prayer to God, in the name, and for the sake of his blessed Son Jesus Christ for Grace, to see the advantages of a religious life,—and for strength, to resist and triumph over every temptation, every hindrance, which may destroy our hopes of immortal glory:—so that, when the lasting separation shall take place between the sheep and the goats, between the righteous and the wicked, the humble, faithful christian, and the mere nominal professor of the Gospel—you and I may be placed at the right hand

of Him, who died for us, and rose again to receive us!
—May we be inmates of his heavenly kingdom, there
to remain with Him, fearless of a second death, from
eternity to eternity and world without end. Amen,
and Amen!

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

1st Cor. 15th, 4th—partly.

“ He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

THE principal object of the Apostle in this chapter, is to prove our resurrection from the grave—and this he does very satisfactorily, by adverting to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, “ the first fruits of them that slept.” Having shewn to the Corinthians, that a Messiah was promised, who should die for our sins, and rise again the third day from the dead,—Saint Paul forcibly appeals to the evidence, which they possessed, and from it illustrates the manner, in which that event was accomplished,—“ he rose again the third day,” says he, “ according to the scriptures.”

The resurrection of our blessed Saviour, and the day on which he led captivity captive are contained in the next article of our Creed that comes under our consideration. In the Apostles’, and in the

Athanasian confession of faith, these two objects are thus expressed, namely, on “the third day he rose again from the dead,”—but, in the Nicene Creed, we have the same words, as are used by the Apostle in the text, “that he rose according to the scriptures.” To find a circumstance take place, which had been long foretold, undoubtedly adds great dignity to the event, and is one of the strongest testimonies, that can be given, to prove that it happened under the express direction of sovereign power. In the discussion of the present subject, this important doctrine will be illustrated. You will see that as “Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale”—so was the son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. So literally did the words of Christ to the unbelieving Jews come true—“destroy this temple, and in three days will I raise it up.”

The first particular to be observed is—that Christ rose from the dead. And no fact could be more plain, no occurrence could be more generally acknowledged, than that He, who appeared in the character of the Messiah, and whom his countrymen derided with the title of “King of the Jews,” literally tasted of death.—Indeed of this we are assured from his crucifixion, which was not done in a corner, in the night, or, in secrecy—but in public, at noon day, and before multitudes,—and, also, from his “giving up the Ghost”—from the piercing of his

side—from the confession of the soldiers, who guarded the instruments of death,—from his burial—from the tenderness of the disciple, who embalmed his body—and from the conduct of Joseph of Arimathea, who placed it in his own new sepulchre.—All these corroborating particulars we have learned from the disciples of our Lord,—whose testimony has, in many instances, been confirmed by heathens themselves. And we must apply again to the same source to procure further information, we must observe, in what a progressive and convincing manner the Apostles obtained intelligence of our Lord's resurrection, and when we have done this, I trust, we shall acknowledge with heart and voice, with every true member of our Apostolic Church—"I believe that on the third day Christ rose again from the dead."

The first information of this glorious event, was given early in the morning of the third day, from the burial of their Lord, by Mary Magdalene, who with astonishment, informed Peter and John, that the large stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, and that the body of their Master was removed. It appears, that those two Apostles were doubtful of the fact, for, before they gave credit to the assurance, they went into the sepulchre themselves, and saw, what Mary Magdalene had asserted, with their own eyes. They saw the linen cloth which had wrapped our Saviour's body, and the napkin, which had

bound his head, folded up, and placed in different parts of the tomb.

The next account of Christ's resurrection was given by Johanna, and by the other women who accompanied Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre. From them we learn this additional evidence—that, at the tomb, they had seen a vision of angels, “two men had stood by them in shining garments,” who had assured them, that Jesus was risen, and had reminded them of his sayings concerning his death and resurrection.

Soon after this relation, Mary Magdalene gave a more important piece of intelligence to the wondering disciples—for, she told them, that she had seen her divine Master, whom, indeed, she, at first sight, took to be the Gardener, but whom, afterwards she well knew,—for he called her by her name, in his usual tone of voice, and dispensing with the homage, which she was anxious to pay to him, whom her soul loved, despatched her to his disciples with the cheering news “that she had seen the Lord.”

From Mary the mother of James and from the other women, we receive the next important testimony, namely, that while they were at the sepulchre they had seen an angel, who had not only assured them that Christ was risen—but, had commissioned them to communicate this joyful intelligence, to all his disciples—“that they should meet Him in Ga-

lilee." To this information, those holy women added—that, as they were amazed and terrified at the sight of the angel, and were flying from the sepulchre, with the intention of communicating these strange tidings to the Apostles. Jesus himself met them, and saluted them, with "all hail"—and gave them the same commission, which they had received from the angel at the tomb, to which they added, that, before he left them, "they held him by the feet," and worshipped Him.

These different manifestations of our blessed Lord followed in very quick succession—but a pause of several days took place before He was next seen;—in order, probably, that his disciples might reflect on the circumstances that had so recently occurred—might compare the different reports together—and bring back to their recollection the many predictions of their Master, to which they had been referred, first by the angels, and afterwards by Christ himself.

Our Saviour's next appearance was to two of the disciples, as they were journeying to Emmaus, and were discoursing and reasoning upon the probability of his resurrection. "In their way Jesus expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself"—and—after he had convinced their reason, that He ought "to have suffered," thereby treating them as rational creatures, and had gone into the house—He discovered himself by

“breaking bread.” By that action He immediately called to their mind the form, which a short time previous to his crucifixion, he had instituted in remembrance of his death”——“and they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, and told them what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them by breaking of bread.”

The next confirmation of this astonishing fact was more public, and when the disciples were nearly all assembled.—As the two were relating the discourse, which they had just held with Jesus in their way to Emmaus—and how he afterwards broke bread with them, lo, says the Evangelist! “Jesus himself stood in the midst, and said unto them—peace be unto you!—And they were terrified and supposed that they had seen a spirit.”

At this public manifestation, our Lord did not merely shew that he was risen from the dead—but, He gave them an indisputable testimony that he was risen with the same body, in which He had exercised his sacred ministry. Indeed, from the following language, which he used at that meeting, it appears, that some doubted whether his presence were real, or visionary. “Why, says our Saviour, are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your mind? Behold my hands, and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see:—for a Spirit hath

not flesh and blood, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they believed not for joy, and wondered, Jesus said to them, have ye any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he did eat before them."

One disciple, however, was absent at that time, who would not receive the testimony of his brethren. Our Lord, therefore, condescended, after eight days, to submit to a further examination,—“except,” said Thomas, who was wonderfully obstinate in his unbelief, “except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and shall put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” This temporal infidelity of the Apostle, however, gives irresistible force to the testimony that he afterwards maintained. For when Jesus appeared again, he challenged Thomas to make a full experiment of what he was so determined to know. He touched our Saviour—He put his fingers into the print of the nails. He thrust his hand into his side—and with the sincerity of full and absolute conviction, exclaimed, “My God and my Lord.”

After this, St. John informs us, that Jesus shewed himself to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias—where, in order to prove that his two natures were re-united in him, He wrought a miracle by a great draught of fishes. He, also, foretold what should happen to his favoured servants, Saint Peter and

Saint John. That the former, in his old age, should have his hands "stretched out against his will, and himself girded, and carried whither he would not:"—and, that the latter, should not soon die, but tarry until the impending destruction had fallen on guilty Jerusalem.

Although, at this point, the account of our Lord's resurrection closes in the four Gospels, yet we read of several other manifestations, before Christ's final ascension into heaven, in the writings of the apostles. "He was seen," asserts Saint Paul, "of above five hundred brethren at once." "For forty days together he shewed himself alive, by many infallible proofs, and spake of things concerning the kingdom of heaven." In the presence of all the Apostles "he was taken up" from them visibly into heaven. He appeared, also, after this to Stephen, the first noble martyr who died in defence of Jesus and his truth. "Being full of the Holy Ghost he looked up steadily into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God;" and last of all, he was seen by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "as one born out of due time."

In this circumstantial and artless manner have the Evangelists and the Disciples of our Lord, related the particulars of Christ's resurrection from the grave. Some, perhaps, may be inclined to ask, "who were the men, on whom the authority of this important article of our faith depends?—and why are we to

yield implicit credit to their testimony?" The question is, indeed, natural;—and, as very little has yet been said in these discourses upon the evidence of those, who were called to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, I shall embrace the present opportunity of shewing, that from the number—from the character—situation—design—resolution,—in short, from every circumstance of their useful, though persecuted and painful lives—the testimony of Christ's disciples becomes indisputable, and proves the religion that they published to be divine, and calculated "to make us wise unto salvation."

If, then, you consider the number and character of the men, who were commissioned to preach pardon and grace to the repenting sinner, you will find that their testimony carries with it the greatest assurance of the truth. For the witnesses of our Lord who took the most active part, were few in number. Although "five hundred brethren" at once, beheld the Lord of life, after he had risen from the dead,—yet, scarcely more than twelve in number "preached him crucified." By the ministry, however, of these few men, were emperors converted—idols were overthrown—heathen temples were deserted—nations and kingdoms were civilized,—and the dominion of Satan, curtailed, and shaken at its very centre.

As their number was small for, so was their character apparently very ill suited to their important

function. The greater part of them, were men of humble birth and mean engagement—with minds gross and uneducated, with notions contracted, and with feelings and opinions strongly prejudiced in favour of the Jewish religion, as it was taught by the scribes and pharisees. Like their infatuated countrymen they looked for, in the Messiah, a temporal Prince, over whom death should possess no control.—Accordingly, when they beheld their Master nailed upon the cross, and yielding up the Ghost—they concluded that all hope of his resurrection was vain, and that death was an enemy, to which, as he seemingly could not conquer it, he must inevitably yield. Such was the character of the men, who, by their own confession, “were to save them that believed by the foolishness of preaching.” And we may truly say—“that by the foolish things of this world God has confounded the wise; and the mighty by the things that are weak and despised; that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

If we consider their situation, or connection, with our Lord, we shall find it to be such, as adds considerable weight to their evidence. For they were the constant attendants of their beloved Master. They had conversed with Him the greater part of his painful ministry,—were witnesses of his resurrection,—“and saw with their eyes, and handled with their hands, the word of life.” By four men, as we know, whose names they bear, were the four

Gospels written. Saint Matthew, who was the author of the first, although a Jew, was a publican, or tax-gatherer, under the Romans, and his office seems to have consisted, in collecting the duties due upon commodities which were carried, or from persons who passed over, the lake of Genesareth. He was "sitting at the receipt of custom" when he was called by our blessed Saviour, and, from that moment he exchanged a profitable occupation and the conveniences of life,—for a state of poverty and affliction. After our Lord's ascension, it is supposed that Saint Matthew preached the doctrines, which he heard his Master deliver, to the Gentiles in Æthiopia, and finally confirmed the truth of them by sealing them with his blood.

The two next Evangelists are Mark and Luke, who, though not Apostles, were exceedingly well qualified to record the particulars of our Saviour's resurrection,—for, in all probability, they were among his early disciples,—had been eye-witnesses of most of the things, that they have related, and received the gifts of the spirit on the day of Pentecost. Saint Mark was the constant companion of Saint Peter, in his various travels. By his preaching and miracles, he planted the Gospel in the western world, where in support of it, with exemplary meekness, he endured an excruciating death. And Saint Luke was an equally inseparable companion of Saint Paul, and intimately conversant with apostolic per-

sons.—Saint Luke laid down his life, in defence of what he had written, and has ever been considered an able advocate and promoter of the ministry of his divine Master.

With respect to Saint John, the fourth and last Evangelist, he must be allowed to have had a competent knowledge of the facts that he records, because according to antient testimony, Saint John was of near kin to our Saviour, was honored with the most intimate confidence, and loved, beyond the other disciples. He, with Peter and James, was the only witness of Christ's raising the ruler's daughter,—of his transfiguration, and of his dreadful agony in the Garden. Saint John was the only Apostle, who stood near the cross when our Lord was crucified, and, consequently, was well enabled to record the history and miracles of that painful scene. He, also, zealously maintained the holy truths that he had written—and being the last of the two evangelical writers, he was able to confirm and ratify the three former Gospels. And thus, my brethren, from this brief review of the situation in life of the Evangelists, you will perceive, how well qualified those four men were to record the particulars of our Lord's resurrection, and how entirely they deserve your unfeigned assent to the holy truths that they delivered.

The constancy and resolution exhibited by the first teachers of Christianity, in every period of their

arduous ministry, may be, also, adduced as strong evidences of their sincerity. For, as they well knew, that what they preached was not a cunningly devised fable, but, concerning the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ “they spake the word of God with boldness,”—“and with great power gave witness to the resurrection of our Saviour.” They were well aware, that persecutions and afflictions would attend the performance of their duties, and they were assured, “that they should be brought before Kings and Governors for Christ’s sake, for a testimony against Jews and Gentiles.”—Accordingly, they were not surprised at the fulfilment of their Master’s words, but rejoiced that “they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, and to be made partakers of his sufferings.” Had they not been confident that they were asserting facts, which they were bound to defend, a very different sentiment would have prevailed among them.—Yes, indeed they would then have been unable, under extreme torture and the pains of death itself, to have cried out—“our rejoicing is—the testimony of our conscience.”—“We have fought a good fight.—We have finished our course—We have kept the faith—and we know that there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give us.”

If, to these proofs we add the doctrines, which they preached and the lives that they led, nothing

more can reasonably be required respecting the authority of that testimony, on which was grounded our Lord's resurrection. With regard to the doctrines of the Apostles, they were such, as plainly discovered, that they had received their embassy from heaven. They opposed universal charity, modesty, humility, and every kind of goodness, to the malice, pride, vanity, and avarice of an evil heart. Like their divine Master, they taught, that in the worship of God, men should be humble and spiritual—that their words and thoughts, as well as their actions, were under the observance of heaven, and ought to be duly governed.—That they must believe in God, and also in Jesus Christ,—be baptized for the remission of sins—and devoutly, and frequently partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of their Redeemer and Benefactor—to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls for immortal happiness.

Such were the principal doctrines of those men, who have assured us “that Christ is risen from the dead”—and their lives were invariably consistent with their doctrines. In their public and private conduct, they presented to our view every thing that was amiable, virtuous and worthy of the religion which they taught.—“Ye are witnesses,” was their strong appeal to those amongst whom they sojourned, “and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we have behaved ourselves among you.” “We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty,

not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but, by manifestation of the truth, commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Before I close this part of our subject, let me, my brethren, ask you individually,—after these corroborating and convincing proofs—whether you can disbelieve the evidence of the Apostles?—And—whether so few men, at one time greatly prejudiced against the truths they afterwards recorded, with lives as exemplary as their doctrines were pure,—who maintained what they preached at the peril of every thing that was dear in life, and even of life itself,—whether such men would have transmitted to posterity the history of our Saviour's resurrection, had they not been certain of the fact? Indeed, you may truly say of their evidence, as Gamaliel said of their doctrine—"if it had not come from God, it would have been long since disbelieved." Compare the events foretold in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, with the Gospel account, and you will confess them to appear more like the narration of circumstances, more like a history of facts that had already occurred, than a prophecy that was delivered so many hundred years before the truth of it was confirmed. The perusal of that chapter, when connected with the life and sufferings of the Son of God, has converted many an unbeliever, and turned the incredulous to the faith and religion of Jesus

Christ. Oh may it increase and confirm our belief!

The last object of our inquiry is, into the time that our Lord laid in the grave, and the day of his resurrection. The mode of reckoning comprehends both the day and night. It was in ordinary signification in the days that the Gospel was written, and accords with our own common and familiar mode of computation. Christ was crucified and died at the time of offering the evening sacrifice on the last day of the Jewish week. This, according to the usual manner of computing, was the first day. The day of his body's continuance in the sepulchre was the second, and the day of his resurrection, though not a whole day, but a part only, was the third. And thus was literally fulfilled our Saviour's prediction—"after three days I will rise again."—"Destroy this temple and in three days I will build it up." And, from this memorable and ever-blessed act, it came to pass, that the obligation of the Jewish sabbath died, and was buried with our Redeemer—and revived on the day of his resurrection. And well, indeed, might the seventh day, which was consecrated to preserve the remembrance of a deliverance from Egyptian bondage, resign all its former solemnity, when that glorious morning appeared, on which a far greater redemption was procured! And the apostles did, therefore, rightly in consecrating it to the service of Him, "by whom all things are created, which are in heaven and earth," and in meeting,

from that period, on the first day of the week, to perform their religious duties. Devoutly is it to be wished, that we may ever follow their blessed example! That we may, like them, assemble together in the courts of the Lord's house, and, by a worthy observance of this day of earthly rest, prepare for an eternal one,—which we may be called upon to enter, after the termination of a few sabbaths more!

Upon reverting to the subject that we have been considering—how ought our hearts to burn within us! What an animating prospect do we behold, to excite us to walk worthy of our profession, and to live like beings, who are redeemed for immortal glory! You have seen, my brethren, that this stupendous instance of divine power, is not built upon conjecture—but, is confirmed by such a train of connecting and convincing circumstances, as have confounded “the wisdom of the wise”—and proved it to be the completion of a plan, formed and matured by infinite mercy for the salvation of miserable sinners. You have seen too, that the doctrine of the resurrection was not preached by men like ourselves, who were fearful, perhaps, of bearing the odium of the world, and slaves to unruly appetites,—but, by such, “as spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” and who died in defence of the cross. I urge you, therefore, to remember—that whether you believe it, or not—the unalterable fact remains the same.—All the consequences will follow in the

fulness of time—your body, and your soul will be raised from the grave, and receive the reward, or the punishment due to them, “according to the deeds done in the flesh.”

Suppose now, I were in conclusion, to address you in the language of Saint Paul to Agrippa, and say to each of you—O Christian, “believest thou these things?”—Your answer, I trust, would be—in the words of our Creed, “I believe that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead the third day.”—If then, you do really believe this—“as a tree is known by its fruits,” so will your faith be known by your actions. You will look up to Christ for salvation, who is our life, “that when He shall appear, you, also, may appear with Him in glory.” Under all the trials of this transitory scene you will be patient, and filled with the hope of better days in a kingdom, where there is neither sorrow, crying, nor pain. Your affections for earthly things will become chastened and mortified, and placed on those spiritual joys, which are at Christ’s right hand for evermore.—And, whenever you are tempted to act contrary to your profession, you will remember, that the same everlasting word of God that declares the resurrection of the first-fruits of them that slept, declares also—“that all that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt.”

These are the most natural and the only inferences

I shall urge from the preceding subject. And, that they may impress your minds with their infinite importance, I shall close with those words of the Apostle which advert to the happy termination of our course, if, through life, we shall act, as men should act—as men who “know that their Redeemer liveth, and that He will stand, at the latter day, upon the earth.” “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are from above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, and not on things upon earth, that, when Christ who is our life shall appear, you may appear also with Him—in glory.”

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

1st Peter 3d, 22d.—partly.

“ Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God.”

Among the many important events, that were to occur during the work of man's salvation, was our blessed Lord's ascension into Heaven. This memorable circumstance was distinctly foretold by the ancient prophets in the most animated language,—and its accomplishment is related by his beloved disciple, in a manner, which discovers at the same time, our Saviour's affectionate regard for his sorrowful attendants, as well as his perfect acquaintance with heavenly things—“ Let not your heart be troubled,” are his consolatory words, “ ye believe in God—believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you,—and I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. And I will pray

the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. Peace I leave with you—my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. It is expedient for you, that I go away—for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.—But, if I depart—I will send Him unto you—and your heart shall rejoice—and your joy no man taketh from you. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.—In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” If, my brethren, there be any meaning in these affectionate expressions, they must be intended to convey our Lord’s gracious concern, for those men, whom He had chosen to be the evidence of his mission, and the promulgators of his divine precepts, and they afford a clear prediction of his return to that glory “which He had with his Father before the world began.” It is the fulfilment of this prophecy, which is to form the subject of our present meditations,—and may the Almighty grant it to be explained according to his most holy word, and to be enforced agreeably to his blessed will, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Saint Peter has expressed in the text, and almost in the same words, the meaning of that important, and consolatory doctrine, which occurs in the part of the Creed that we are to consider, “He ascended

into heaven—and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” In which, are three things to be believed. First, that Jesus Christ has ascended from the grave,—secondly, that the place, to which He ascended, is into Heaven,—and thirdly, that He now sitteth on the right hand of God. All these essential articles of our faith are summarily enforced by the Apostle, in these words,—“He is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God.”

Now with respect to the ascension of our blessed Master, we have every necessary evidence to prove the important fact. The disciples, it is true, were not permitted to be present, when the Lord of life burst the chains of death, and rose again from the grave, but, as the ascent of Christ into heaven, was an act which might, hereafter, be disputed—they were present at, and were “eye-witnesses” of his departure from the world.—They knew, indeed, from melancholy experience, that He, whom they had followed, had been unjustly crucified. They had heard his very last words, on the cross,—and they had seen him carefully entombed by Joseph of Arimathea.—After these things they could not possibly doubt the certainty of his death;—nor, could they disbelieve the truth of his resurrection, when they had spoken with him,—eaten with him—handled him—and had been directed by Him. All these subsequent events prevented any necessity for the disciples to be present at the sepulchre, when Christ rose from the

dead.—But, as it regards his ascension, the case was far different,—because, it was expedient for them to know—how,—when,—and to what place, our Lord ascended,—that they might faithfully relate the manner, in which, Jesus was parted from them,—be certified that He was exalted—and was gifted with that divine power, which would enable him to perform his mediatorial office—which is, to preserve his Church from the common enemy,—and to prepare mansions for all, who truly love and serve Him. How condescending was all this arrangement to the weakness of human faith,—and—on what a sure evidence are the promises of the Gospel established!

Accordingly, we find the Apostles relating this stupendous event, in various parts of their writings, as persons, who had seen the act—and who were, also, previously informed that it would shortly take place. Saint John, for instance, tells us—that when Christ was seen by Mary Magdalene, who, out of the eagerness of her affection, would have embraced Him, he desired her to moderate her joy, and refrain from her devout purpose. “Touch me not,” says He, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God!”

This caution, it should be observed, was given at our Saviour’s first appearance after his resurrection, and was designed to prepare the minds of his dis-

ciples for the event, which He had predicted previous to his death. But, after this manifestation, "he discovered himself alive to them, by many infallible proofs. Being seen of them for forty days—and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And having completed his labor of love upon earth, having fully convinced his disciples of his resurrection, and prepared them to instruct future generations, in the religion that he had taught them, our Lord then returned to that immortal kingdom, which he had left, out of compassion to a sinful world. "So then," writes Saint Mark, "after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."—And the Evangelist, Saint Luke, has recorded this instance of divine power, with, as it were, our Lord's last verbal instruction to mankind,—"these are the words that I spake unto you, while I was yet with you—that all things must be fulfilled, which were spoken in the law of Moses and in the Prophets—and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then, opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day—and that repentance should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.—And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry

ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from the most High. And He led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them."

Had we, my brethren, been witnesses of our Lord's departure—and had we seen him rise from the earth, with all that glorious majesty, with which he is described to have ascended from the disciples, we should have remained, no doubt, for a considerable time, fixed to the spot—overpowered with indescribable awe, and filled with mute astonishment.—If, "their hearts burned within them," when Jesus, in an unknown character conversed with them in their way to Emmaus—what exalted sentiments!—what resistless conviction of his divine authority!—yea, what firm confidence in his consolatory promises must have been produced by that transporting sight! With painful apprehensions, scarcely to be conceived, they had recently beheld Him "buffeted, spat upon—scourged and crucified." They had heard his power derided by the multitude—and his declaration of supreme sovereignty ridiculed, as blasphemy. Even their own hearts had sunk within them from fear, and from the dread that all their hopes would be disappointed. But, after this splendid display of his omnipotence, every doubt subsided. Mournful suspicion yielded to their strong conviction of his Almighty power, and their no longer timid hearts triumphed in the rock of their strong

salvation. When they saw him, to use the beautiful language of the Psalmist, in reality the Lord of nature, "making the clouds his chariot, and riding on the wings of the wind," "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy—and were continually in the temple praising, and blessing God."

After this it is recorded—"that as soon as a cloud received Him out of their sight, and while they were looking stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, two men stood by them in white apparel, which said, "ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven."

On these scriptural authorities, is grounded your belief in the article of our Saviour's departure from this world. From which, we learn, that Jesus did actually and publicly ascend into heaven, and, that like the several other parts of his sacred character, his ascent was confirmed by divine testimony. For, as angels proclaimed "his birth to the shepherds, who were tending their flocks by night"—and as similar blessed spirits proclaimed his resurrection to those affectionate disciples, who intended to embalm his body—so did angels proclaim and attest his glorious ascension, and announce his triumphant return to the kingdom of his Father in heaven.

To these assurances of the four Evangelists, I shall proceed to produce some of those types, from the old Testament, which give great weight to the testimony of those holy men, who record his ascension, and which prove that event to have been, occasionally, though indistinctly predicted, as well as the several other parts of our Lord's divine character, and supreme power. You may regard Isaac—the heir of promise, as one of those images of Christ's ascension,—who, having been prepared for sacrifice, as the Apostle writes to the Hebrews, “was received from death in a figure”—God being with him and blessing him in all things.”—The various vicissitudes of Joseph's life, and his unexpected exaltation at the court of Pharaoh may be regarded as another.—To these you may add the character of Joshua, who was preserved from the fate of the rebellious Israelites, and who entered as captain of God's people into the promised land :—of Elijah, who was translated into heaven in the presence of Elisha—and of the High Priest of the Jews, who was an acknowledged type of our Lord, under the law, and who went into the Holy of Holies, which prefigured the highest place under heaven.—“Christ being an High Priest of good things to come, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle—not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; by his own blood, He

entered in once into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,—into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

To these expressive types and figures may be added those prophetic declarations, which predicted our Lord's ascension into heaven, and which concur to render the testimony of the Apostles indisputable. Such, for instance, is the assurance of the inspired penman, “thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive—thou hast received gifts for men,—yea even for thine enemies—that the Lord thy God might dwell among them.”

Of the same import is this animated hymn of praise, “lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors—that the King of glory may come in.” Such was, also, the command contained in the writings of the same prophet—“sit thou on my right hand until I have made thine enemies thy footstool.” And lastly, a similar meaning has the passage contained in the prophecy of Micah's—which, even from the confession of the Jews themselves prefigured the grand event under consideration. “The breaker is come up before them: and they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord is on the head of them.”

These are some of the figures and predictions, that relate to the ascension of our blessed Lord in

the holy scriptures—by which you may clearly perceive that the Evangelists have only declared the accomplishment of an event that was generally expected. And—if you add to this corroborating circumstance, that those servants of the Lord were “eye witnesses, of what they have related, and that they have authenticated in the fullest manner possible, even with their blood, the truth of their relation by laying down their lives in its defence—you can have no hesitation to confess, most explicitly, and conscientiously with the minister, in the Apostles’ Creed—“I believe that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven.”

I proceed now to the next subject that I proposed, which is to explain the sense, in which the adjoining article is to be used.—Saint Peter assures us in the text—“that Christ is ascended into heaven,” and, therefore, it is a circumstance most necessary to be believed. But, veiled as we are with ignorance and with guilt, how are we to obtain an accurate description of that holy and immortal place? To the everlasting word of God alone we must apply for information, “not a jot, or tittle of which will be allowed to fail”—and there we shall find it described in such animated and impressive terms, as must induce us to make it the object of our ardent desire, and enable us to form some faint notion of its ineffable nature and felicity.

Heaven, then, is the eternal residence of God—

and seat of his everlasting glory—where, as the apostle told the Hebrews, the crucified Jesus appears, in the presence of God for us, as our intercessor;—and where—as Saint Peter assures us, “he is exalted on the right hand of God,” where He is said “to have been taken,” and to have entered. It is the holy of holies—the inmost part, behind the veil—the sanctuary of God—a temple “not made with hands”—the house and mansion of Jehovah—where there is “fullness of joy and pleasures for ever more.” All these are scriptural expressions, divested of every fanciful and inflated description, which is beyond the reach of our understanding and our heart—and which are simple and intelligible. They imply that Heaven is a place infinitely pure—infinately blissful—infinately enduring. Into these celestial courts has our Redeemer ascended,—even into that inaccessible light, where God the Father dwelleth. And there, my brethren, may we dwell, when God shall call us hence!—Into that holy place may the good Lord, in due time, receive us to himself, for the sake of Jesus Christ!

The next point of doctrine to which we are required to assent, in the Apostles' Creed, is, our Saviour's “sitting on the right hand of God”—a mode of expression, that is very frequently used by the sacred writers, to represent the very highest exaltation Jesus could receive. As we have no other term by which to denote the reverence, which is paid by the angelic

Host, to the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity—so it is, in that sense, used in our confession of faith, and, by an allusion to the respect paid on earth to persons of birth and eminence, we learn what reverence and honor our Lord receives at the right hand of God;—and to that eminent situation our Lord referred, as the place of his residence, in one of his answers to the prejudiced high Priest, who sat in judgment against him—“I say unto you—hereafter, shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

The last illustration of the phrase is from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews,—where, from his mode of reasoning, we may perceive that he deemed that place the highest honor to which the Son of God—the “brightness of His glory, and express image of his Father's person, and heir of all things,” could be advanced. “Unto which of the angels, said God, at any time, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? But, unto the Son he saith—thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, therefore, hath the Lord anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows, and placed thee on his right hand—where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.”

In, however, your assent to this scriptural phrase of “sitting at the right hand of God,” you are not to

conceive any fixed position, or local situation of the body—for in some parts of holy writ, our Lord is described as “standing” on the right hand of God. Saint Stephen declares “that he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” And—in the revelation of Saint John it is said, “that there stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne and of the elders.” Indeed, in many other places, we read of the faculties of the Almighty, as of the hands, the eyes, the heart, the bowels—all of which are figurative expressions accommodated to our confined perceptions—for God has no corporeal qualities,—being, as the first article of our Church expresses, “without body—parts, or passions.” For, as by the hands of God, is meant his power,—by his eyes, his providence—by his heart, his wisdom,—and by his bowels, his tender mercy,—so, by his “sitting at the right hand of God,” is implied the firmness of his possession—the eternity of his kingdom—and the imperturbable placidity of his exalted condition,—or—as it is literally and fully expressed in his own words—his “glorification.” “O Father glorify me, with thine own self—with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was.”

Thus, have I endeavoured to explain the three particulars contained in this article of the Apostles’ Creed, namely—that our blessed Redeemer “has

ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. With respect to the time of his absence, or how long a space will elapse before his coming again no just opinion can be formed—for it is not known either to men, or angels. But, this momentous truth is revealed to us, a truth equally awful and impressive,—that—“from thence, Christ will come again to judge both the quick and the dead;”—and on this most solemn subject my next discourse will be made.

The authorities, on which you are to believe the doctrine of the ascension, and the meaning of that article, in which it is comprized, having been illustrated, I have only to point out some of the principal ends of our Lord's abode in heaven, and the natural influence which the knowledge of them should produce upon your faith and practice.

From the exalted situation, then, in which our Saviour rests, “sitting on the right hand of his Father,” and possessed of supreme power,—He is able to observe all his earthly subjects, and to administer to every one the strictest justice. As no thought of the heart can escape his minute observation, He is capable of rewarding, or of punishing, according “to the deeds done in the flesh.” And—as He has obtained the victory over sin—the world, and the devil, He can, and will restrain the violence of those enemies of our peace within such limits, as

shall answer the wise purposes of His government, and be instrumental to the salvation of those, who truly love and serve Him.

Jesus Christ fills, again, another exalted character, and as highly essential to our eternal happiness, as that of our Judge,—namely, our Mediator, in which he exercises his priestly function, and atones for the sins of the world. “If any man sin,” saith Saint John, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.” “Therefore, having a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens,—Jesus the Son of God—we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find help in time of need.” Through Him we have access to the Father of mercies. He has established a free intercourse between God and us, so that whatsoever petitions we offer in his name are sure to be heard—whereas, had not the intercession of Christ been joined with our prayers, in vain should we have pleaded for help, and have implored divine assistance. We might have breathed out our souls to the very close of our pilgrimage in fruitless groans—so little were we able to do for ourselves, and so much has Christ done for us.

On the “right hand of God,” moreover, Christ performs his prophetic office, and sends, as he promised, the Holy Ghost, or Comforter. During his ministry, and even after his resurrection, the Holy

Ghost was not given, because he was not then glorified—but, as soon as Christ was advanced to that seat of eminence, He sent down, on his disciples, the third Person in the adorable Trinity, who will remain in the world to the end of time, acting on, and disposing men's hearts and inclinations to do works pleasing and acceptable to God, unless they perversely resist and quench his divine operations.

And, finally, our Lord has ascended into heaven, to prepare eternal mansions for all who love and serve him. By his advancement into glory, is confirmed God's parental regard for the humble and contrite sinner, and the reward that will be eventually bestowed on the faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. We may, indeed, consider that "crown of glory," and that exalted distinction to which our High Priest is exalted, the certain preludes of our own happiness, and the prevailing incitements for us to go on our way rejoicing, to which, we should stedfastly look; and, in all our tribulations, we should keep in mind the good things that are reserved for us at God's right hand.

Such are the prominent doctrines implied in this article of our Creed—and, if we do really believe that Jesus Christ is in the presence of God, sitting as our Judge, our Mediator, and our King, we shall conform our lives to the profession of our lips, and by a cheerful obedience to his will add our mite of service to his glorious exaltation. As our Judge also,

who beholds our inmost thoughts, we shall be careful to give Him no cause for anger; as our King, we shall pay him a ready and unfeigned submission—and, as our High Priest; we shall be grateful for his intercession in our behalf with his Father, and conclude all our imperfect petitions in his most holy name. Such a sacrifice, as the ever-blessed Son of God has offered—such a display of grace and mercy as He has extended to mankind—and such a glorious exaltation as He has received at the right hand of the Father—should increase our faith, excite our gratitude, and confirm our unshaken confidence in all his promises. In those, who sincerely acknowledge the ascension of Christ, such fruits of a living faith will be exhibited, and to such may be applied every consolatory and every animating assurance, which was made to the first followers of the Cross. If you, my brethren, happily are such, to you, then, I may say, as a servant and a minister of God—the Comforter whom He promised to send “will abide in your hearts.” The enemies, whom He hath subdued, will remain in subjection under your feet. The life and immortality, which his Gospel discovers, will, in due time, reward your faithful labors. Whatsoever you ask under the influence of the Holy Ghost, you shall eventually receive. “Heavenly Mansions” are prepared for you. Angels will celebrate your entrance into the realms of bliss with shouts of gladness. “Pleasures, which no eye hath seen, no

heart conceived," will wait your everlasting possession, and the righteous Judge of quick and dead will graciously reward your perseverance in virtue and godliness, by the heartfelt eulogium, "well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of thy Lord."

Grant, then, merciful and Almighty God; that, as we profess to believe that thy only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, hath ascended into heaven, we may in heart and mind thither ascend, and dwell with Him continually, who liveth and reigneth with thee, and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

CHRIST'S COMING TO JUDGMENT.

2 Tim. 4th. 1st.—partly.

“ The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing.”

THE dread of a future judgment forms one of the greatest restraints to an immoral life. So strongly indeed, by divine mercy, is that apprehension impressed upon the mind, that, neither the gayest scenes of life, nor occupations the most intense and the most active can prevent its occasional recurrence. It will intrude, in defiance of every effort to the contrary, and forebode the severity of future punishment.

Aware of the importance of this solemn doctrine, it has been introduced by the Author of my text, in his most impressive address to Timothy—“ I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead, at his appearing, and at his kingdom ; preach the word ; be instant in season, and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, ex-

hort with all long suffering and doctrine." To this Christian Bishop it appears to have been a most awakening motive to urge him to be active and zealous in the discharge of his sacred functions, to know, that God, who saw and remembered what he did, would call him to a strict account for his conduct, as a minister of his Son's Gospel.—And for us, whatever be our respective situations in life, it is equally awakening to know that He, whose birth, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, we have been contemplating in the progress of these discourses, will, in the time appointed, most certainly come from thence, to reward, or punish the use, or abuse of our several talents.—“For the Lord Jesus Christ will judge the quick and dead at his appearing.”

In these words are comprized the three doctrines in that portion of the Creed, which is to be the subject of our present meditations. The first is, the person, who is to be the judge of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ :—the second is, the objects on whom judgment is to pass, the quick and the dead :—and the third is, the time of his coming, at his appearing, or kingdom. These three important particulars are thus expressed in the compendium of your faith, “from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” These objects of Christian faith, with the blessing of God, I shall briefly explain.—And, that you may be able to give a “rea-

son of the hope that is in you"—I shall, afterwards, remind you of the certainty, the manner, and the reasonableness of a day of judgment, trusting, with the great Apostle, that if any argument, if any motive, if any apprehension can prevail upon you to live like accountable creatures, who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and answer for every deed done in the flesh, this most solemn doctrine will influence, and benefit every subsequent period of your existence.

With respect to the coming of our Lord, you must remember, my brethren, that the same sacred volume, which has recorded the predictions of his sacred and glorious character and the particulars of his spotless and painful life, with his gracious design of redeeming a guilty world, and of reconciling it to his offended Father, has, also, recorded, in various places, and with great precision, this eventful circumstance, namely, that the same divine person, who has done such mighty things for us, will come in the fullness of time, and dispense rewards, to such, as have profited by the means of grace, and consign to everlasting punishment, those, who have neglected so great salvation.

No language can more fully, or more explicitly declare this solemn fact, than that contained in the following assurance, which was given by an Angel to the disciples of Christ, who saw Him ascend into heaven—and who were gazing at that amazing prodigy with fear and astonishment. "This same Jesus,

who is taken up into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

If the disciples had pondered on those sayings of our Lord, which related to his second coming, they would have expressed less astonishment, at the event, than they did.—For, not many hours previous to his sufferings and death, He told them that "He should only go away to prepare for them mansions, and that he would return and take them to himself; and in many parables and private communications he inculcated the same doctrine. Read, for instance, the similitudes of the wise and foolish virgins, of the ten talents, of the marriage feast,—and, more particularly, that animated description of a future judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, and you will find not only Christ's return expressly mentioned, but the solemn procedure of that awful day majestically related. "The Son of God shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, and He shall sit upon the throne of his glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations."

To this information our Lord has condescended to add, as it were, a reason for his appointment. "For," says he, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, and hath given Him authority to execute it, because, He is the son of man." And should it be asked, why, as the son of man, Christ is more qualified, if

we may reverently use such an expression, to judge the quick and dead, than God the Father? the following weighty reasons may be given for the appointment, among the many, which might be urged, were we permitted to penetrate farther into the counsels of infinite wisdom. Because, for example, because "no man hath ever seen the Father, or can see him and live,"—because, Christ is the august person described by Daniel the Prophet, "before whom judgment is to be set, and the books to be opened"—because, the son of man hath been tempted in all parts, like as we are tempted, and has united to his divine perfections our human nature, having been made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, and, therefore "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—and because, in his own person he will confound his enemies, and realize the prophetic vision of Saint John—"behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also, who pierced Him." For these convincing reasons,—for these gracious revelations,—you may, without hesitation, believe, that Jesus Christ "will come again to judge both the quick and the dead."

The next particular to be explained, is the sense in which you are to receive the terms quick and dead,—and which comprize the objects on whom judgment will take place. As in points of doctrine, even those that are the least intricate, there have been many fanciful notions formed and main-

tained,—or, in the words of an admired author, as “fools rush in, where angels dare not tread”—so, there have been many absurd conclusions drawn from this scripture phrase. Time will not allow me to enumerate them, nor, indeed, were it in my power, do I imagine that any benefit would arise from the relation—since the precise meaning is so generally acknowledged:—which is, that by the quick, you are to understand all those persons, who will be alive, at the second appearance of Christ—and by the dead, all such, as have lived and died, previous to that eventful day,—from the first Adam to the last human being, whom death will subdue. And, how truly scriptural this interpretation is, you yourselves may judge from the following passages taken from the Epistles of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, and the Thessalonians. In the one the Apostle says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; behold, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” So changed indeed, as to render death unnecessary, and be as a resurrection. And in the other instance he observes—“that we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord,”—that is the Christians who shall be found alive, at the second coming of the Lord to judgment,—“shall not prevent or be before them, which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ,” before those who are alive shall be changed,

“shall rise first,—then we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Hence, then, the terms “quick and dead,” become very clear, and you will readily assent to this part of the Creed, which requires you to believe, that, at the coming of Christ, all descriptions of human beings, of each sex, of every quality, condition, and nation,—that all, who have ever lived, the high, the low, the rich, the poor, the learned, the ignorant, the prince, the subject, the tyrant and the slave, shall stand before the bar of judgment, and receive the sentence of everlasting happiness, or, of everlasting misery, according to the deeds done in the flesh—for the dead, small and great shall stand before God—“and the books shall be opened—and the dead shall be judged out of those things, which are written in the books, according to their works.”

The other doctrine to be considered is contained in the expression, at the appearing of our Lord—or, as it means, whenever the time of judgment is mentioned in Scripture—the end of the world. Although the time appointed by the Father is for wise reasons concealed from our knowledge, although “neither men, nor angels” are acquainted with the precise period, when the Messiah will come in his glory to judge the quick and the dead, yet, we are assured it will arrive in due time,—the time best adapted to display the wisdom, the justice and the ineffable mercy of

God. To you, and to me—and to all, who have lived before us, the knowledge of the exact day, or hour, would be of no importance. For, all who have gone before us, are now in a state of either happiness, or misery, waiting the event of that awful period—and, in the same situation, we shall be soon ourselves. Die we must, and perhaps, very shortly, and very suddenly—and in the state we depart this life, so shall we appear before the bar of judgment. “For,” says the Apostle to the Hebrews—“it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment.”—And he declares, that the highest of all authorities, the Son of man, “shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left—and these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Thus much we are permitted to know concerning the time of our Lord's appearance. I shall now remind you of several other points of doctrine, which, though not expressed in the Creed, are yet very closely connected with this article, and because, as they frequently occur in scripture, they are essential objects of your faith. In the following representation of the certainty, the manner, and the reasonableness of Christ's second coming, you must not expect to have every illustration referred to,—

or, every argument submitted to your attention. Feeble, indeed, are the best efforts of the most learned, and the most highly gifted in the discussion of subjects, that are so exalted and so sublime. Let us implore, however, the same divine spirit, whom our Lord sent to instruct and guide his timid disciples, to descend upon, and sanctify our hearts! May it render our humble inquiries into the awful truths of the Gospel answerable to all the ends of salvation, for the sake of Jesus Christ!

To learn, then, the certainty of a day of judgment, recourse must be had to the unerring pages of Revelation, where it is foretold, under a variety of titles, and described by numerous representations. If you admit the Scriptures to be written by divine inspiration, which they have been proved to be on a former occasion,—a Revelation from the most High, in order “to make us wise unto salvation,” you must, also, admit this doctrine of a future judgment among the rest, for it is the consequence and effect of all the rules and precepts contained in the Gospel, the end always to be kept in view—the completion, as it were, of the great work of redemption and grace.

If, indeed, it were otherwise, then might you safely rejoice in your youth, and walk in the sight of your own eyes and in the ways of your heart—then you might enter into the paths of the wicked, and eat, and drink with the drunken. Whereas, ac-

cording to the system of God's government, each of these excesses must be committed at the peril of your soul:—and though judgment is not immediately executed, it is only for a season delayed. For this reason, sacred Scripture very justly refers to the period of final retribution, under the terms of the “last day”—the “great day”—“the awful day,” and “the day of the Lord”—and represents its consequences under a variety of beautiful similitudes full of unequalled imagery, and replete with the most important instruction. At one time, we are reminded of the solemn event by the master of the vineyard ordering his steward in the cool of the evening, and after “the heat and burden of the day,” to settle with his labourers;—at another by the Lord, who returned after a long absence to reckon with his servants;—and now, again, by the consequences of being provided, or not provided, with a sufficient quantity of oil for the coming of the bridegroom.—These declarations, these illustrations, are, as it were, comments on this doctrine of a final judgment, and specify, as far as the subject will admit, what is to be believed concerning the second coming of our Lord.

From shewing the certainty of the day of judgment, I proceed to remind you of its manner and solemnity. And of these awful circumstances enough is known, to make every prudent mind anxious to prepare for its dreadful consequence.

What, let me ask you—what are the most impressive occurrences of this natural and fleeting world, compared with those that are to take place at that inevitable period? What are the loudest peals of thunder rolling along the vaulted roofs of our hemisphere?—What are the flashes of the most vivid lightning darting through the black and angry clouds?—What are the raging billows of the foaming ocean:—or, what the yawning jaws of volcanic desolation, to the terrific appendages of that last, and inconceivably tremendous scene? By every figure that can strike the heart of man with dread and dismay, has the word of God described it. It is to arrive so “suddenly,” that neither men nor angels, will know its approach—for, “as in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the son of man be!” It is to arrive in the solemn season of still and midnight darkness, “like a thief in the night.” A shout, and the trump of the archangel will proclaim the Judge of quick and dead to be even at the door.—So piercing—so loud the sound will be, that it shall reach the most distant portions of the earth. Then the graves, which afforded a long asylum to the particles of once animated nature, will obediently disclose their various deposits. Then, the caverns of the ocean will deliver all who were buried in its voracious surge, and then, every den, and every corner of the earth will be penetrated and illumined by the raging fires, which are to con-

sume not only the materials of this perishable globe, but even the spacious firmament on high, which now fills us with wonder, and which declares the exceeding great glory of God. "For," proclaims the Judge himself, "the stars will fall from heaven—the powers of heaven will be shaken, and the first heaven, and the first earth will pass away."

After these solemn events have occurred, the succeeding particulars connected with the day of retribution, become progressively more important and more alarming, because they will involve our souls, either in an endless state of happiness, or of irremediable misery. Oh! gracious Father of heaven! how amazed and terrified, will be those thoughtless—those hardened sinners, whom thy commissioned servants could not make serious, could not make wise, either by the promise, or by the terrors of thy Gospel, when thou comest, in the clouds of glory, to decide their everlasting doom! Should there be any such present, who are unconcerned for the eternal consequences of their conduct in this life,—should there be one soul among you, who, though conscious of an hereafter, is still deceiving itself with the hope of a "more convenient season," to prepare for death,—think, think, I implore you, while you can, on the hour of judgment!—Bring home to your hearts some of the solemn occurrences of the coming of our Lord, and then decide, whether you ought to be watchful and

prepared, or not, for that final scene.—Perhaps, the first object that will meet your inquiring eyes, after the signal of His appearing—will be, Jesus of Nazareth himself.—He, who suffered under Pontius Pilate—who rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. The Saviour of mankind, you will see in his human nature—not then an injured and unrepining sufferer, but, the acknowledged Son of God, the Judge of quick and dead, clothed with sovereign power—attended by all the heavenly host—and advancing, in his glorious majesty to take vengeance on the enemies of his Father's kingdom! After having had all your thoughts, words, and actions impartially investigated and placed before you,—having had all the advantages duly weighed, which were given you to improve,—having had examined the situation, in which you were placed,—and the abilities that you possessed:—after these strict, but just inquiries—a dread and universal silence will prevail.—They, who now drown the sober voice of conscience and the solemn warnings of the gospel, will feel neither inclination, nor power to disturb the deadly stillness of the scene, and much less to fly from the proclamation of a sentence, on which their final and eternal destiny depends.—“Come ye blessed children of my Father,” Christ will say to “those on his right hand,” “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:”

—to those on the left hand, depart—“depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.” Then, my brethren, will shouts of heavenly joy and gladness,—then, will hymns of praise and thanksgiving celebrate the impartiality of the judgment, and the justice of the sentence: and then, too, alas! will bitter groans—and piercing cries, and weeping and gnashing of teeth, confirm the madness of sin, and prove “its wages to be death.” “For these will go into everlasting punishment—but the righteous into life eternal.”

These assurances are among the interesting particulars, that are revealed in scripture, to impress, with resistless efficacy, the certainty, that Christ will come from the right hand of his Father, at the end of time, “to judge the quick and dead.” And notwithstanding what wicked men have asserted and continue still to assert, for it is only wicked men who have reason to wish that there may be no hereafter, and it is only they who affect to disbelieve it,—notwithstanding such characters have blasphemously declared, that all these representations were formed by crafty persons to keep the world in awe, and to answer some interested purpose,—I feel no doubt that you would unfeignedly assent to the reasonableness of a final judgment, independent of revelation, were you to rest your conclusions—only the dictates of

reason—on the decisions of that supereminent faculty, which raises us so much above every other creature of this lower world.

For, if there be no future retribution, how will you account for the seeming inequalities that prevail—inequalities, which appear in many instances, so injurious to allow, and so degrading to confess? You are, for example, not consulted in the choice of your lot in life. In fact, you come into the world, without either your knowledge, or your concurrence, and you pass no inconsiderable portion of your days, scarcely knowing that you do exist. When you are advanced in your earthly course, numbers of you find yourselves, after many a painful, many a fruitless effort, compelled to linger in the vale of poverty and contempt—and often feel these evils to be made incalculably heavier, by the acute sufferings of infirmity and disease. In this case, existence, without a future recompense, would be a curse, and not a blessing. Could you, my poor friendless brethren, not look to other scenes, where tears shall be wiped from the eye and where sorrow shall be chased from the heart,—it were better for you never to have been born—and you might justly accuse your Maker of partiality, in suffering you to pine under sickness and misfortune, while others around you were scarcely ever afflicted and had always enough and to spare. But, if you believe in a supreme Being, you must, from a very little exercise of your reason,

believe that Being to be good and just, and then you will conclude, that, as the virtuous do not always prosper here, they will be proportionably recompensed in another and a better world.

But you need not rely wholly on this reasoning, clear and convincing as it is, for we possess such wonderful faculties, as are existing evidences of the truth of the doctrine.—Were there to be no future retribution, why should we have the freedom of will to choose good, and to reject evil? Why should the mind be able to soar beyond the clouds, and almost to penetrate into the very abodes of happiness and glory? From whence arise the applause of conscious rectitude, and the smittings of remorse? Why does our heart approve our good wishes, and our virtuous actions? And why does it condemn criminal desires and guilty deeds? Because, my brethren, the finger of omnipotence has written this indelible truth on the heart of man—"that verily there is a reward for the righteous: doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

You will remember, therefore, that on this subject, reason is the handmaid of revelation, and that she assists your belief in the doctrine of a future judgment. She tends to corroborate this article of our faith,—and to shew that it is necessary to reconcile us to the painful scenes of life, and to account for the mysterious dispensations of Providence,—that it is the strongest inducement to the practice of

virtue, and the greatest restraint to the commission of vice,—that without it, human laws would lose their coercive power, and that it is inconsistent, as well as irreligious to say, that because we see “the oppression of the poor and the violent perverting of judgment and justice, and because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, “that God does not see, and that there is no knowledge in the most High.” “For He that is higher than the highest doth regard, and will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or evil, and then shall every man have praise of God.”

Lastly. I might produce the testimony of many of the most illustrious of the Heathen to corroborate the dictates of reason, and to confirm the assurances of religion,—but, I shall rest satisfied with what I have already advanced upon this article of the Apostles' Creed, and ask you, in conclusion, how can you,—you who know, upon the authority of God's word, that Christ will come, in the end of the world, “to judge both the quick and the dead,”—how can you hear and profess to believe these things, without endeavouring to “live righteously, soberly, and godly,” in this present life? What are the resources you possess to shield you from the common lot of all? Can you avoid the approaches of the last enemy? Can you subdue him by your own feeble efforts? Can you arrest the solemn proceedings of the

last day? Can you prevail upon your Lord to delay his coming? Can you command "the mountains to fall on you, and screen you from the wrath of the Lamb." "In the midst of life we are in death," and when God determines, that the arrows of disease shall prove fatal, neither our tears, our entreaties,—neither the supplications of our friends, nor the utmost aid of man can divert their destined aim. Look, then, I pray you, upon the hour of death as near at hand. Consider your judge as already standing at the door. Remember that this very hour an account of your conduct may be demanded. That, if rich—a just state of your stewardship will be required,—that if in power—it will be known whether you protected the fatherless, and have seen that the oppressed and needy had their right. That if you are learned—whether your talents were employed in promoting the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. And if you were poor—whether you have laboured honestly to get your living, and have done your duty in that state of life, in which it pleased God to place you. Do not, my friends and brethren, retire to your beds before you convince yourselves to what condition you would be consigned, whether to a state of happiness, or of misery, were the coming of Christ to be instantly announced. And, that the effect of this conviction may be impressive and lasting, implore the Almighty, in the language of David, "to teach you so to number your days, that

you may apply your hearts unto wisdom." By the adoption of this timely and religious conduct, death will be stripped of all his terrors—the grave will be disarmed of its fancied horrors—the Judge of his tremendous powers. The transition from life to death will not only be easy and placid, but even desirable—and your resurrection from the tomb, will be your admission to a scene of glory, sure, certain, endless, inexpressible !

ON THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts 19, 2.

“ We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”

MANY of you, my brethren, may recollect, that, in my first discourse upon the Apostles' Creed, I endeavoured to direct your attention to some of the principal causes of the infidelity that unhappily prevails—and suggested that a very likely method, under God, to correct and ultimately to suppress that spirit, as far humble individual influence could extend, was to explain and inculcate the fundamental doctrines of our Christian faith—concluding, that when we are firmly persuaded of the existence of a supreme Being, and find the nature of his attributes unfolded and confirmed by reason and revelation,—when we are acquainted with the merciful scheme of redemption, by his blessed Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and know how to value and apply for the aid, and

direction of the Holy Ghost,—and when we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting, we shall be impelled by motives of the most obligatory force “to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith we called,”—and be enabled, by our religious knowledge, “to give a sufficient reason of the hope that is in us, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

With this important object in view, I have already endeavoured to point out in a series of plain and familiar discourses, what you are required to believe, concerning God the Father Almighty, and his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,—the first and second persons in the ever-blessed Trinity. I am now arrived at the third and last part of your belief, which refers to the Holy Ghost—to that Holy Catholic Church, which is gathered together, and is preserved by his divine power, and to those especial gifts and benefits, which Christ confers by the operation of this all powerful Spirit. Such as, the fellowship of the Saints in one holy communion—the free remission of sins in this life—the resurrection of the body, after death—and the uniting again of soul and body unto life eternal.

These are the six articles that remain for our consideration, and which I shall endeavour to illustrate in their established order, commencing with the doctrine of the Holy Ghost,—whose illuminating assistance let us humbly implore, that while we con-

template together his divine essence and various operations, He may visit our souls with his heavenly grace, and cause "the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart to be acceptable in the sight of God, our strength and our Redeemer."

The portion of Scripture, which I have chosen for my text, leads directly to the subject of our present meditation. It conveys the answer of "certain disciples," whom Saint Paul met at Ephesus, to the question which he had proposed to them—"have ye received the Holy Ghost, since ye believed? or, have ye received, not merely its sanctifying influence, but, also, its miraculous gifts—such as speaking with tongues, the gifts of prophecy, and the gift of healing? To this inquiry the disciples answered, in the words of the text, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Not that they were ignorant of the essence, or person, of the Holy Ghost, but of His extraordinary and miraculous powers—of that plentiful effusion, which was conferred on the first preachers and dispensers of our pure religion, for the planting and propagating of the Christian faith.

A large portion of mankind, I apprehend, are too deeply absorbed in worldly pursuits to feel themselves much interested in this important question,—and, I fear also, that there are multitudes even among the professors of the Gospel, who, with respect to the efficacious purposes of believing, have yet to learn, "whether there be any Holy Ghost." But not such,

I trust, are you. Rightly informed respecting His personality and divinity,—confident that you are indebted to His operations, for every divine influence, from the laver of regeneration in baptism to the final consummation in glory—and, assured that every commendable action, whether natural, moral, or spiritual, proceeds from the spirit of truth, you will ever make the third Person in the adorable Trinity the object of your serious contemplation and worship, “in order that you may be filled with all joy and peace in believing—and that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

The first thing to be observed is the name, or title, given to this object of our faith.—“I believe in the Holy Ghost”—a term which signifies a spiritual and intellectual substance, that differs from body and matter. His name is as distinct, and as expressive of his peculiar operations, as the names are of the other two objects of our baptismal covenant. To God the Father, for instance, is ascribed the creation of the world,—to God the Son, the redemption of it,—and to God the Holy Ghost its sanctification,—or, the immediate cause of holiness in man. His divine person is spoken of as the “spirit of truth”—“the eternal spirit”—“the comforter”—“the great teacher”—“the sanctifier”—“the reprover of the world.”—Terms these, which, you will clearly perceive, as we proceed with the subject, apply indi-

vidually to the Holy Ghost, and which are essentially distinct from the Father and the Son.

From the name, let us now proceed to the consideration of the nature of the Holy Ghost,—which can be obtained from sacred scripture only. Indeed, all that can be learned of His personality and divinity, must be derived from that divine record,—which, if it enlighten us, but in part, yet affords as much information, as we have need of, for all the purposes of our spiritual calling. We know, then, from that infallible source, that He is distinct from the Father—because, Saint Paul describes Him, as the “spirit of the Father, and informs us, that God revealed the Scriptures by the agency of the Holy Ghost. By our Saviour he is declared to be the “spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father”—and is sent by the Father. “The Father,” also, “no man hath seen at any time”—but—the Holy Ghost, hath been observed in a bodily form, “descending like a dove and abiding upon Christ.” And he is said again to be our “advocate with the Father,” and to intercede with God for us. “Ye have received the spirit of adoption,” writes the Apostle, “whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

From the same source we learn, also, that the Holy Ghost is equally distinct from the Son. For He is called “the Spirit of the Son.” He was sent by the Son, according to our Saviour’s promise to his

disciples, and He was seen to descend upon the Son of God and to establish his Divinity. And, agreeably, to these distinctions it is said by Saint John, "that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The office of a "witness" also, is particularly ascribed to Him by our Lord, a short time previous to his exaltation. "When the comforter is come, He shall testify of me." On account, therefore, of these peculiar acts of the Holy Spirit, when you acknowledge your belief in Him—you acknowledge Him to be distinct both from the Father, and the Son.

His nature being thus distinct, this consequence necessarily follows—that He is a Person—not an emanation, or, an attribute, or, a quality of the Deity, but a Person, existing with the supreme Father, and the eternal Son—in the one indivisible essence of the godhead. As such the Holy Ghost is frequently mentioned and alluded to. Our blessed Lord himself says, "when He—the spirit of truth cometh, he will guide you into all truth." Many other, also, are the personal offices ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Such, for instance, as that of teaching—"He shall teach you." Of reminding, "He shall bring all things to remembrance," and of attesting—"He shall testify of me." To Him, again, are attributed knowledge, will, grief, anger, and speech. All which expressions evidently prove that the operations and faculties of the Holy Ghost are personal. "No one,"

it is written, "knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit." "The Spirit divideth to every man severally as he will." The Spirit may be "grieved and provoked" unto anger. And the Spirit is related to have spoken and to have said—"separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them." The possibility, moreover, of committing such a sin against the Holy Ghost, as is different from all other sins and blasphemies, that are committed against the Father, and the Son, and which is never to be forgiven, proves, undeniably, that He must be a Person to be capable of receiving so aggravated an offence.

If to these proofs of the personality of the Holy Ghost, you add, my brethren, his "descending like a dove" upon our blessed Saviour, his assisting at the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary, and his concurrence in the administration of baptism, according to the command of our Lord,—“Go ye, baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” you will clearly perceive the propriety of that passage in one of our authorized creeds, “there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost,”—and you will give it your unfeigned assent.

The next doctrine, under this article, is the Divinity of the third person in the adorable Trinity, “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God,” because the same appellations are

given to Him in scripture, as are given to the Father and to the Son. It is written in the book of Psalms, for instance—"that the Israelites tempted the most High." Which disobedient conduct is thus paraphrased by the prophet Isaiah, "they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." The same inspired writer assured the Jews, that He was sent to them in the character of a prophet, by God, whereas Saint Paul declares, that Isaiah was sent to that obstinate people by the "Holy Ghost,"—thereby acknowledging and confirming his godhead. The same doctrine, also, is established in the awful reproof of Saint Peter to Ananias and Sapphira.—For, as soon as the Apostle had asked the former, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost—he immediately subjoined—"thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

The reason, again, why Jesus was God as well as man, and which forms the essential distinction between the character of Christ, in his human nature, and that of every other prophet, proceeded from the operation of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," said the angel to the Virgin Mary, "and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee: therefore, that Holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

The Holy Spirit, moreover, possesses all the incommunicable perfections, and essential properties of the divine nature. He is the "eternal Spirit."

—“How much shall the blood of Christ,” writes the Apostle, “who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” He is omnipresent, “where shall I go from his Spirit?” said the Psalmist. He is omniscient, “the Spirit,” writes Saint Paul, “searcheth all things.” To Him is ascribed the Spirit of knowledge and understanding, the spirit of prophecy, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of revelation, the spirit of truth, —and from Him all the prophets received their pre-science of future events.

Before I leave this branch of evidence in proof of the divine nature of the Holy Ghost, I intreat you to remember, that such an equal participation of name and character, can be only the effect of an equal participation of all the perfections and properties of the Godhead: and, however mysterious such apprehensions of the divine existence may be to our limited ideas, yet, that the fact is undeniable, and requires our unfeigned assent.—For every part of scripture concurs to stamp the certainty of this great and fundamental doctrine;—namely—that in the undivided essence of the Deity, there is a distinction of persons—and yet, that this distinction of persons, by an incomprehensible unity, constitutes, at the same time, but one God. This is, indeed, a profound mystery!—a mystery never to be explained to our satisfaction, at least, in this world. To

attempt it, is to create a useless and presumptuous anxiety; and to disbelieve it, is to prove our folly and our wickedness, because the word of God has declared it to be true. Humble, therefore, and content, let us rest satisfied with the powers and perception that our Maker has bestowed upon us, without perplexing them with doubtful conjectures, and harrassing them by a fruitless research,—assured that greater would have been given, had they been necessary, either to promote our happiness in this world, or to secure our salvation in the world that is to come.

Having shewn what Revelation has unfolded respecting the nature, the personality and the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and consequently, how properly we believe in, and worship Him, “as the Lord and giver of life,” His operations are next to be considered—a subject, which will be highly interesting, and which will not only illustrate his existence from all eternity, but will manifest also, under what infinite obligation we are for his especial agency in the world. Here, indeed, we enter upon a very large field of observation, much too large to be wholly traversed in the usual allotment of our time. However, with as much brevity as is consistent with perspicuity, I shall refer to some of the leading acts of his beneficial influence, which are displayed in the early ages of the world, till the coming of the Messiah,—in the times of the Apostles,—and during the present con-

dition of human life. After these instances of his divine agency, you will be precluded from asserting, with the disciples in the text, "we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

The first traces of the energy of this august Being may be discovered as early as the Creation.—For, before the worlds were framed by the word of God—and when the whole mass of inanimate matter presented one undistinguished chaos lying yet in a confused and shapeless heap, "without form and void," "the Spirit of God," that is the third person in the ever blessed Trinity, "moved upon the face of the waters."

Passing by the works of the Creation, we next arrive at the period of man's innocence.—So long as Adam preserved his obedience, God favoured him with sensible manifestations of Himself, but as soon as he transgressed,—all visible appearances were withdrawn from him, and, after that melancholy time the Almighty communicated with Him, by a voice only,—which, on very clear evidence, is acknowledged to have been the Holy Ghost.

After the expulsion of our first parents from paradise, and in succeeding ages of the world, the same divine person gradually unfolded, either by prophecy, by vision, or by miracle, the great blessing of redemption, through Jesus Christ. At first, indeed, under obscure and mysterious promises, but in succeeding ages, so clearly and so distinctly—that the

humble inquirer was led to discover from whom that inestimable blessing was to be derived. The "spirit of prophecy" was unquestionably the most considerable and momentous of all the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, previous to the incarnation of our blessed Redeemer.—"Prophecy," writes Saint Peter, "came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It was the energy of this divine Spirit, that compelled Enoch, the seventh from Adam, to prophecy, and, which filled Zacharias with the Holy Ghost, who prophesied a short time previous to the advent of our blessed Saviour in the flesh. By the same Spirit, the Virgin Mary became one of the immediate heralds of our Lord. The good old Simeon, and Elizabeth and Anna prophesied.—And John the Baptist, is said "to have been filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." These are very prominent and striking instances of the operations of the Spirit, and should you require any further illustration of the subject, you may, at your leisure, trace in your Bible the intermediate time between the first and the second Adam, and you will find many other examples of his agency during that important period of the world.

With respect, now, to the second proof of the existence of the Holy Ghost on the earth, as manifested in the Apostles and first preachers of Chris-

tianity ; it should be remembered, that several Prophets had predicted, that some great event should take place in the latter days, in the church of God, “from the pouring out of his spirit.” “It shall come to pass afterwards,” says the Prophet Joel—“that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams—your young men shall see visions:—and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” And here, passing over all inquiries respecting the agency of the Holy Spirit, during the season of our Lord’s continuance upon earth, let us proceed to direct our attention to those public and illustrious evidences, to which this prophecy refers.

Our Lord, we find, had prepared the minds of his disciples for the coming of the Holy Ghost, by assuring them “that He would send a comforter, who should instruct them in all necessary truths, and abide with them for ever.” And, by commanding them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high, he had awakened their expectations of this grand event. And these expectations were realized, when his poor and timid followers were assembled together, on the day of Pentecost, to celebrate that feast of the Jews. You are too well acquainted with the manner, in which the effusion of the Holy Spirit then took place, to render any relation of it necessary from

me. What the gifts were, which descended on the Apostles, Saint Paul has enumerated in nine distinct instances. "To one is given by the Spirit" says he, "the word of wisdom—to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit: to another the gift of healing, by the same Spirit: to another, the working of miracles: to another, prophecy: to another, discerning of Spirits: to another, divers kind of tongues: and to another, the interpretation of tongues."

To enter into a circumstantial relation of these gifts in their nature and design,—and to trace the steps of the Apostles the use and application of those gifts, as displayed and exemplified in the course of their ministry—would be almost to furnish an historical account of the Christian church during the Apostolic age, and to engage in the consideration of a subject, that is inconsistent with my present design. Sufficient will it be for me to remark, that the effects and efficacious influence of these gifts were so evident, and so answerable to the purposes which they were intended to produce, that the disciples, from being unlettered men, and unable to receive, and to teach the doctrines of Christ crucified, became empowered to speak in "unknown tongues," to contemplate with the eye of faith the glories of the gospel kingdom, and to appeal so forcibly and so convincingly to the consciences of men, that thousands, and tens of thousands, were converted

from Judaism and Gentile superstition, "to the truth as it is in Jesus," and became the pillars, on which the Church of God was first raised, and was afterwards so wonderfully supported and enlarged.

Many, indeed, of those miraculous powers, which were imparted to the Apostles, are now withdrawn, because the present state of Christianity renders them no longer necessary. Nevertheless, the influences of the Spirit are still to be traced among mankind—a circumstance, which leads me to the last division of the subject that we are now considering.

To deny, then, the operations of the Holy Ghost, upon the human mind, because we are not sensible of its immediate and divine impulse, is to advance an assertion, which is destitute of all evidence to support it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one," said Christ, "that is born of the Spirit." God, who made us, is a Spirit. He is every where present, and acts upon the mind in an infinite variety of ways that are unknown to, and undiscoverable by us. By His Holy Spirit we are regenerated at our Baptism. By the same Spirit we are afterwards awakened to a sense of our duty. It is He, that reveals to us the will of God. It is He, that opens the blind eye. It is He, that heals the diseases of the soul. It is He, that cherishes our good dispositions,

comforts us under the pressure of affliction, strengthens us in our difficulties, sanctifies and places our good resolutions in a capacity for salvation. All these inestimable essential gifts are still imparted to every devout and sincere believer. And for these gifts the Holy Scriptures instruct us constantly and earnestly to pray, and without them, all the outward means and ministration of the word, will prove useless, ineffectual, and nothing worth.

We now, my brethren, draw near to the conclusion of the present subject. I have endeavoured to explain to you the meaning of the name, the nature, the personality, the divinity, and the operations of the Holy Ghost, before the coming of Christ, during the times of the Apostles, and first teachers of the Gospel, and at the present period of the world. You will, therefore, I trust, without any hesitation, or reserve, confess from the heart with your Minister, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." That is, I believe in that infinite and eternal Spirit, which is the cause of all holiness in men, which unites their persons with Christ, and which purifies and sanctifies their souls and bodies to a full and everlasting acceptance in the sight of God.

Believing this to be the doctrine of the Gospel assured, that unless you have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you—"you are none of His," you will be naturally anxious to learn, in what manner you should act, to make your bodies "the temples of

the Holy Ghost." In that same divine revelation, which unfolds the agency of this blessed Spirit, are to be found the means by which it is to be obtained. And one of the most ordinary ways of having the Holy Ghost imparted to us, is by hearing the preaching of the word. "Received ye the Spirit," saith Saint Paul to the Galatians, "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" and it said in the Acts—"when Peter preached, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word."

Another way is by humble and earnest prayer to God; and by a regular participation of the appointed means of Grace. And this we learn from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "If ye who are evil can give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Ghost to them that ask it?"

A third way of obtaining this divine influence is by repentance. "Repent ye," exhorts Saint Peter, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost."

These directions for obtaining this divine principle of life and holiness proceed from the word of God, and are so plain that the meanest capacity can understand; and, with the supplicated aid of God, become able to resolve them into practice. Make but the trial, and do not be disappointed, because you experience no violent emotions within you,—

emotions which are too frequently the inflations of fancy, or the fumes of enthusiasm, rather than the pure and steady impulses of divine grace; but persevere in the means prescribed by the Gospel, and rest assured that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost will be with you."

Indeed, you yourselves will be able to ascertain the fact by the following consequences. You will obtain a perfect conviction of the enormity of sin in the sight of God, and the danger of it to your immortal soul. You will mourn over the corruption of human nature, and, therefore, feel the necessity of a sincere repentance. You will look up to Him, from whom cometh salvation, and place your sole confidence in Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins. After this, you will perceive by the change which has taken place in your inward disposition, and the conduct of your life—"that you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, are followers of God, as dear children, walking in love as Christ also has loved us."

In these instances you may learn—whether you have received the Holy Ghost. Be assured, it becomes of the utmost consequence to know—yea, to know immediately, whether the Holy Ghost dwell in you.—"The night cometh when no man can work," and if the night of death overtake you, as it has overtaken many a thoughtless soul, in the act of

“doing despite to the spirit of Grace,” and resisting his holy motions, your punishment will be more intolerable than that of Sodom and Gomorrha. “If,” says the Apostle, “they who despised the law of Moses died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy, who tread under foot the Son of God, and do despite to the spirit of Grace?” How alarming are the consequences here implied! How inexpressibly dreadful, and tremendous must be the punishment to be executed by the great and terrible God upon the despisers of his Son, and the spirit of Grace! You appear my brethren, to listen to me with attention, and your consciences, I trust, bear testimony to the awful assurances which these words convey. Consider, then, what you feel within you, as the merciful impulse of the divine Spirit. He is speaking to your soul. He is striving within you to alarm you into a sense of your danger, and to lead you to happiness and immortal glory. Will you perversely resist his sacred motions? Will you rashly drive him from your bosom? Will you deprive yourselves of his advice in tribulation, his aid in temptation, and his support in the hour of danger? “My Spirit,” declared God, before the flood, “shall not always strive with man.” If, then, you will presume to grieve and provoke that Spirit to anger, as the Jews did in the wilderness, you will do it at the peril of your souls, and exclude yourselves from entering

into the heavenly rest. But if, in future, you humbly use the means of attaining and preserving his holy impulses, receiving the cup of salvation and calling upon the name of the Lord, I may address you in the words of my blessed Master—"Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. The Comforter will come unto you. The Spirit of truth will abide with you—your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."

ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Ephesians 5th, 27th.

“ That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish.

THERE is, perhaps, no article in the Apostles' Creed, which, at first sight, appears so obscure, and so little necessary to be assented to, as the one, which is to form the subject of our present consideration. Reviewing the various opinions, which are entertained respecting the doctrines of the gospel, under the influence of which opinions, multitudes alas ! have been induced to form themselves into separate bodies, and to arrogate a character of superior holiness, we might be inclined to inquire which, among so many, is the true church of Christ ? Tracing, also, the history of Christianity, from its first establishment to the present period, and finding some of its once most flourishing churches to have become corrupt in principle, to have declined in estimation, and, eventually, in the words of scripture,

“to have had their candlestick removed from them”—we might be tempted to conclude, that there is no Church holy:—and, perceiving how cruel, how bigotted, and how impious, the tenets are of that large body of Christians, who denominate themselves, exclusively, members of the true Catholic church, we might be led to imagine, that the sentence in our Creed is unauthorised by scripture, and, therefore, is improperly enjoined as an article of a Christian’s faith. Many persons have been staggered from want of opportunity, or ability to investigate the doctrine, by some such considerations, and have been tempted, in not a few instances, to deem our religion to be the fabrication of designing and interested men.

But, although there unhappily exists among us a variety of Christian societies, although some of the churches, which were the most flourishing have had their existence destroyed by their own corruptions, and notwithstanding the church of Rome has arrogated to herself a title, to which she has no pretensions, still there does exist in the world a holy and a Catholic church, which is to be believed in, by the followers of Jesus Christ, and which is, therefore, with the greatest propriety, inserted in our formulary of faith. It was to this existing church, that Saint Paul alluded in the words of my text. Urging, in forcible and appropriate terms, the duties of the married state, to exemplify that ardent affection, which

should subsist between a man and his wife, he instances the love of Christ for his church, by which love he gave himself for it—that He might sanctify, and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word,—“that He might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but, that it should be holy and without blemish,”—and which it will be, previous to the day of judgment, when all those spots, and wrinkles, with which it is, at present, deformed, by its unworthy members, will be cleansed and removed by the blood of Christ, and when he will indeed present it to himself a spotless spouse—a glorious church—holy—and without blemish.

From the consideration of this portion of sacred scripture we shall be naturally led into such inquiries, as will illustrate the sense of the article in our Creed, at which we are now arrived. We shall find, for instance, the meaning of the term Church explained—the character, which the sacred scriptures reveal concerning it—how it may be said to be holy and catholic—and with what propriety it is received into the Christian confession of faith. After these expositions, such practical inferences will be submitted to your attention, as deserve to be remembered and observed. And may that blessed Spirit, who animates and sanctifies the society of the faithful people, of which the church is formed, accompany us in our humble labors, and render

them serviceable to our eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The first object, then, of our investigation is, the meaning of the term Church, as it is used in the Apostles' Creed. Our information, on this point, must be drawn, as usual, from the records of divine truth, and I shall advert to some of those passages in the Gospel, which refer to our Saviour's intention of "building a church," that should supersede the worship of the synagogue, and, in course of time, be extended through all the world. Now one very explicit manifestation of that intention was made at the time, when Saint Peter replied to the question of our Lord, with this noble confession of faith, "thou art the Son of the living God!" Jesus answered,—“blessed art thou, Simon, Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee—but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Not, my brethren, upon Peter, the rock confessing—but upon Christ, the rock whom Peter confessed—upon the firm and imperishable acknowledgment, which the Apostle then made, it is that on which our Saviour declares, “I will build my church.”—It is upon that fundamental truth, namely, “that I am Christ, the Son of the living God.” On this shall my church be established: and the whole body who shall agree in this one faith, I will protect and defend to the end of the

world, and “against it the gates of Hell shall not prevail.” This is, indeed, the body, of which Christ is the head. This is the bride, of which He is the husband. These are branches of Him, who is the only and “true vine.”

These assurances present us with a plain declaration of our Saviour’s intention to erect a church,—which, in defiance of every attempt to effect its destruction, will continue to exist to the end of time. And soon after our Lord’s ascension into heaven, we find the church actually built,—that is, we find in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that an assembly of believers in Christ, as the Son of the living God, and promised Messiah, met together at Jerusalem, under their proper teachers and governors to worship God, and to edify one another in the manner which our Saviour had appointed. In its infancy, indeed, His church was small, and like a grain of mustard seed, consisting only of twelve Apostles, and with them a few other disciples, whose number did not exceed an hundred and twenty. But soon after—“the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved, who continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And the multitude of them that believed were of one mind and of one soul.”

Such was the origin of the Christian church, and from this small beginning, it increased so widely

and so rapidly, that in a very few years, its congregations were, from necessity, divided into several parts, each of which was called, and constituted a church. For as those Christian worshippers, though they were distinct and dispersed, were united under one head, to whom life was communicated by one Spirit.—as they maintained the same pure faith and doctrine—as they owned to, and participated of the same sacraments rejoiced in the same hope of their calling, and kept the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, they were spoken of, and were considered as one, as the same church, and body of Christians, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom, all the building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple of the Lord.”

This was the condition of the church of God in the first ages of Christianity, and it still exists in the world, embracing within its pale the whole number of those sincere and pious people, who, though they may differ in some minor points, in regard to discipline and opinion, are yet agreed in all the essential doctrines of the Christian faith—profess the faith of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” and assemble together regularly and devoutly for the purposes of pure and holy worship. Whatever be the distance either of time, or space, that now separates such worshippers—how wide soever apart the altars have been raised, on which were poured

forth the sacrifices of the humble and the contrite heart, their service has been accepted, and, before the final consummation of all things, they will be gathered unto Him who is in heaven, who will form them into a glorious church—"not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish."

It is in this Christian and existing church, that you profess to believe, my brethren, when you declare your faith in the Holy Catholic church, and you do so for these substantial reasons, because, Jesus Christ did promise to build a church, "against which the gates of Hell should not prevail,"—because his Apostles did call together and unite under one head, and in one faith, multitudes of men, women and children,—and because, at this period of the world, innumerable bodies of Christians do confess, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, and only begotten Son of God,—and as such—devoutly hear his holy word, and regularly partake of, and are spiritually nourished by his special sacraments.

Having thus proved, that a christian church exists in the world, I proceed to shew, how very properly it is distinguished by the term holy, and it is so for the following convincing reasons. First, it is holy, with respect to its avocation—or calling of its members. "God has called us with a holy calling," writes Saint Paul to Timothy :—and its design is, to separate us from the present evil world, and to deliver us from the hands of our enemies, that we

may serve God without fear, in righteousness and true holiness all the days of our lives.

It is holy, in the second place, with respect to its offices. In baptism, we are regenerated and dedicated to God, and have the blessed Spirit communicated for a principle of a new and holy life.—At confirmation, we are called upon to consider the promises that were made at our baptism, and the danger we incur of afterwards grieving the Spirit, by a careless and wicked life. And, in the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, provided we truly repent of our past sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and are in love and charity with all men,—we are promised to have our past sins forgiven, and divine grace bestowed upon us, to walk in the way, which leadeth to everlasting happiness. For these great and salutary ends, were the offices of the Christian church established; and surely, that sacred place, in which they are rightly and duly administered must be called holy.

Its members, too, are under an indispensable obligation to lead a holy and religious life. "Let every one," saith the Apostle, "that nameth the name of Christ depart from evil." That church, therefore, is with great propriety denominated Holy, which is erected to train men up in the ways of godliness, and to teach them to go where they may be "cleansed

from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

It is holy, moreover, because it consists of that holy and precious people, to whom God imparts his holiness, and whom he qualifies for the fruition of Himself." "As no man without holiness can see the Lord," so no man will be able to approach Him without previous sanctification, and be made happy after death. In his church this holiness is imparted, and there it is that we are fitted for everlasting happiness.

These four reasons are sufficient to prove, how justly the term Holy is appropriated to the church of Christ in the Apostles' Creed.

It is, however, my brethren, an assertion unhappily but too true, and a fact of too frequent occurrence to be denied, that there are characters to be found among those, who profess to be members of the holy catholic church, who lead scandalous and unholy lives. And from this circumstance, which, though to be lamented, was to be expected, because it had been intimated by Him, who best knew the temper of his church on earth, it arises, that such as are fond of novelty and change, and who are not influenced by any fixed religious principle—but are desirous of believing external devotion unnecessary, desert our church, ridicule its rites and discipline, and eventually deny its doctrines. But, does the want of holiness in some, or even in many of its members, afford a

just cause for heresy and schism? Where shall we find absolute purity? And in what body of Christians shall we search for perfection? Consult, for instance, the history of that family, which was a type and seminary, as it were, of the church of God,—and to which express declarations of his will were made, and you will find in it many imperfections, many impurities, and many “spots and blemishes.” Among the children of Adam there was a murderer who slew his own brother. In the time of Noah, among the sons of God, there were numbers who defiled themselves with the daughters of men. In Noah’s own family, one of his sons behaved shamefully towards his aged parent. In Abraham’s house was an Ishmael, who mocked the heir of promise. In Isaac’s there was a profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a meal, and in Jacob’s, a Simeon and a Levi, who were cruel, and lustful, and “brethren in evil.”

Pursuing, next, the investigation through the church of Israel, when under the immediate and almost visible guidance of the Almighty, we shall find many melancholy instances of wickedness and impiety among that holy and peculiar people. How many, for example, offered sacrifices to a golden calf? How many dedicated their children to the idol Molock? How many thousands bowed the knee to Baal? How many tens of thousands sacrificed in groves and in prohibited places, even when they were

directed and animated to a pure and holy worship by the saints and prophets of the Lord?

Descending, now, to the first establishment of the Christian church, we shall perceive that all its members were not holy. For, as all were not true Israelites of old who bore that favoured name, so all were not true Christians, who took upon them the name of Christ. Among the twelve Apostles, there was one, who betrayed his Master. Among the disciples, whose numbers then did not exceed one hundred and twenty, there was one, who came to Jesus by night, secretly, and fearful of openly professing the Gospel. And there were others, who, having embraced the truth, afterwards denied it, as did Demas and Hymenæus, who caused divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine, that they had once learned. If we follow, now, the church out of Jerusalem, we shall find a Simon Magus, full of the gall of bitterness, and offering to purchase the power of imparting the Holy Ghost. And if we trace its history through the copious annals of Greece and Asia, in that survey, we shall find, and deplore, the factiousness of the Corinthians, the foolishness of the Galatians, and the impiety and eventual destruction of the seven churches, which were once so flourishing, and so distinguished.

From this mixture of good and bad men in every age of the church, you will perceive the absurdity of

expecting to find perfection among the members of any religious establishment—and you will conclude, that want of holiness in the lives of men, professing themselves to be Christians, does not, indeed, cannot destroy the inherent purity of that church, of which Christ is the head.—And if this be true, you will conclude, that it is not only unwise, but dangerous to separate from our Christian church, from a church, which has been purified of all useless ceremonies, and unscriptural doctrines, in which the holy scriptures are constantly read, in which, devout, and viewing them as compositions, the most admirable, prayers are offered, “for all sorts and conditions of men;”—and in which, the sacraments of Christ are regularly and solemnly administered in order to impart, to renew, and to preserve the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit. Beware, then, my beloved brethren, lest any of you float upon the surface of religious uncertainty. Beware, I intreat you, of following those vain and unauthorized teachers, whose novelty and peculiarities may, for a time, attract, but whose unevangelical doctrines may ruin your everlasting peace. Soon, then, will you lose the religious principles, in which you were educated. In a little more time you will think all forms of worship—all assembling of yourselves together, wholly unnecessary. You will gradually live without God in the world. You will die in your unrepented sins and iniquities,—and, be finally cut off from that church, which, at

the last great day, Christ will present to himself, "Holy and without blemish."

Having established the propriety of the term Holy, as applied to the church, it only remains for us to inquire into the term Catholic, and to ascertain whether, or not, it be rightly annexed to our Christian church. The leading sense, and in which we are to receive it, in this article of the Apostles' Creed is, general and universal. And it is there used to express the nature of the church of Christ, and to teach us, that it comprizes every Christian congregation, which acknowledges the form delivered by the Apostles, and which meets in the name, and in the faith of our Redeemer to worship God. The Jewish church, before the coming of Christ, was the only true church of God, yet, it could not be called Catholic, because, it was confined to one people.—"In Judah was God known, and his name was great in Israel," says the Psalmist.—"But the Christian church may be called Catholic, or universal, because it is conformable to a promise, recorded by the same inspired author, "that God would give unto His Son the heathen for an inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession;"—thereby prophesying—that it should be extended throughout the world. And this prediction was confirmed by Christ, in his last directions to his Apostles. "Go," said he, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And

this they soon did. For, after having preached to the Jews, they turned unto the Gentiles, and declared that they did so, by the command of the Lord Jesus, "who had set them, to be a light unto the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

As, then, the term Catholic means universal, it is very properly applied to the Christian church in the Creed.—and we shall prove it to be truly Catholic in these following particulars, namely, with respect to place—to person—and to time.

It is universal with respect to place—because it is not confined to any particular people, or country, for, the inhabitants of all the earth, how wide soever the space between them, provided they act up to the light imparted, may be members of this church, as well as we are, who have the more shining light of the Gospel to direct us, and who serve God according to the degree of our improved condition. "Many shall come from the east and from the west," declared our blessed Lord, "and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. For God is no respecter of persons,—but in every nation, he, that feareth Him and worketh righteousness shall be accepted of Him."

This holy church is universal with respect to persons. It receives into its communion the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the wise and the foolish, the bond and the free. For, writes Saint Paul, "there is neither Jew, nor Gentile, there is neither

bond, nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

It is, also, universal with regard to time—for it hath been in all ages, and is to continue until the end of the world. Of this communion and fellowship were all those holy men, who have lived before us,—as we learn from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews,—“for ye are not come to the mount, that might be touched, but ye are come to the mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven—and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant.”—Such inconceivable honour have all his Saints ! Such honour, has God in his infinite mercy designed for us ! Such supreme exaltation shall we enjoy hereafter, if we are not wanting to ourselves ! We Christians shall be of the same church and of the same beatific company, as the Prophets, the Apostles, yea even Christ himself !!

This is the belief of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, and, to improve it in the manner that is expected, we should adore the infinite mercy of God, in Jesus Christ, for erecting such a church on earth, through which all its members will be saved. The scriptures solemnly assure us, “that there is none other name under heaven by which we can be saved, than the

name of Jesus," And that name is no otherwise given under heaven, than in his holy Catholic church. As none were saved from the deluge, but such as were in the ark, which Noah framed for their reception, by the command of God—as none of the first born of Egypt survived the general slaughter, but such as were within those habitations, the door posts of which were sprinkled with blood, by the appointment of God for their preservation,—and, as none of the inhabitants of Jericho escaped the fire and sword, but such as were within the house of Rahab, for whose protection a certain agreement was made;—so, such only will escape the eternal wrath of God, as belong to the holy Catholic church of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ.

Assured, my brethren, of this most awful truth, we shall endeavour to continue members of his church, which, by the grace of God we may do,—by uniting with those bodies of Christians, who have been congregated together, for ages past, in churches, which are consecrated to the Supreme Being, which are erected for public worship, and the number of which has been of late so much increased, and is still increasing by the pious appropriation of national, and of individual bounty. In these goodly temples the name of Christ is solemnly invoked. In them the holy Scriptures are read—and the sacraments are devoutly administered. Persons, in general, do not seem so much aware, as they should

be, of the great blessings derived from public worship, or they would be more constant in their attendances on the services of the church, and regard them with greater reverence than they do. For the information and encouragement of posterity, on this point, our blessed Lord assured his Disciples that—"where two, or three, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." And where can we have more reason to expect to find our merciful Redeemer, than in Christian establishments like our own? Indeed, it is in these sacred edifices, that the sincere worshipper does find Him present, by his holy Spirit. It is here, that we have a principle of life imparted to us, at our baptism. It is here, that we have spiritual aid vouchsafed by the outward symbols of bread and wine, at the altar. It is here, that our fervent prayers are heard. Here, we are secretly advised in difficulty, comforted in sorrow, and strengthened in the season of temptation. Do not rashly withdraw yourselves from such essential aids! Recollect by what holy men the Christian churches have been filled, and by what eminent and pious divines, her services have been purified! Reflect, how many saints have been prepared in them for heaven above, and what important doctrines are still delivered to make men "wise unto salvation." Take heed, therefore, that you do not despise this great instrument of eternal happiness, and in the day of judgment, be found among the number of those,

“who would not endure sound doctrine, but, after their own lust, heaped to themselves teachers, who had itching ears, and turned away from the truth, and turned unto fables.”

In the next place, as the Christian church is holy—so, also will its members be. To the holy faith you profess, must be added holiness of life. “To your faith you must add virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance.” Of ourselves, indeed, we can do nothing unassisted, we are not able to help ourselves. Therefore, out of mercy to such poor creatures, Jesus Christ has raised up a Church and instituted therein the means of holiness,—so that it now remains with ourselves, whether we shall be among that people, who are zealous of good works,—or, with the children of Satan, though living under the Christian dispensation. Let us not rest satisfied with a mere outward semblance of religion, with an occasional attendance in the house of God,—but, as much as possible, pass our sabbaths, as the first Christians did—“with one accord in the temple, in breaking of bread and in prayer.”

Lastly. As our Lord has assured us, that his church is “built upon a rock,” and that no power visible, or invisible, shall prevail against it, let that assurance inspire us with hope and confidence, whenever the worldly, and the ungodly, unite to destroy its existence. Let us not conclude that the Christian religion is of human fabrication, because

its enemies have occasionally been able to suspend its observance. For the punishment of wicked men, such evils have been, and may be again, permitted. —We know, that the seven churches of Asia have lost the light of the Gospel, because they were lukewarm and corrupt, and that Mosques and heathen temples are now raised, where Christian congregations once assembled to worship the only son of the everlasting God, and we know, also, that a church, which vainly assumes the distinction of Catholic, has had her religious light obscured by shades and thick darkness, because of her gross and existing idolatry. When the evil is corrected, when the members of that corrupt church have been purified in the furnace of affliction, no doubt, my brethren, the blessing of the Gospel will be restored, and all the errors, all the superstitions removed, which have produced her abject degradation. And do thou blessed Lord enable us to take warning by thy past and suspending judgments, that we may know, and feel the value of a true Gospel ministry among us. So long as thy church remains on earth, may it prepare and make fit its members for that awful period, when Christ shall “present it to Himself without spot—or wrinkle—holy and without blemish.”

COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

1 John 1st. 3d.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may also have fellowship with us : and, truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

It is impossible, I think, for any one, who is unprejudiced and possessed of a grateful heart, to contemplate those striking evidences, which are recorded of the divine origin of the Christian religion, and the inestimable blessings which are conveyed to sinful man through the Gospel covenant, without exclaiming with David,—after a survey of the works of the creation,—“ Lord what is man, that thou art so mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou so regardest him !”

“ Man is indeed but a thing of nought, and his time passes away like a shadow,” yet was he created for the contemplation and enjoyment of the supreme and eternal Being :—and, after he had fallen from his state of innocence, in the fullness of time, he was redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ,

and restored to the privileges, which, by his transgression, he had forfeited. And to preserve him from being again entangled in sin, and to qualify him for an heavenly kingdom, into which none can enter without holiness, he is incorporated into the church of Christ, in which he is born of the Spirit, has his understanding enlightened, his corrupt nature sanctified, and in which he lives in communion and fellowship with the saints on earth,—that after death, he may dwell for ever in heaven, with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In this holy connexion then, my brethren, however poor, afflicted, or neglected you may be, “ why should your heart be vexed, or your soul be disquieted within you.” Unnoticed, despised and persecuted—you may still possess, if it be not your own fault, that dignity of character, and that treasure of divine grace, which infinitely exceed the transient honors and the trifling distinctions of this vain and fleeting hour, and you may be associated with all that is great and intrinsically excellent. You are heirs to the inexhaustible treasures of eternity, your conversation is in the courts of the Lord’s house—and your fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ !

These are the exceeding great pleasures—these are the high consolations and dignities, of which the Apostle speaks in the words of my text.—They belong to the Christian state. They are comprized in that union and fellowship, which Saint John,

with the rest of the disciples, had “seen, heard, and declared,”—and they are conferred upon the members of Christ’s mystical body in the Holy Catholic church.

We are now arrived at that part of the Apostles’ Creed, in which, the principal benefits that God bestows upon his church are concisely stated, some of which are graciously imparted in this life, and the rest are to be vouchsafed hereafter. In this world, for instance, the followers of Jesus receive the delightful communion and fellowship, which the Saints have with each other upon earth, and with Christ their spiritual head, as well as the forgiveness of all their sins actual, and original, freely purchased by the death and passion of Jesus Christ, and progressively confirmed to them by the ministry of the church. And, in the next life, they have their souls and bodies delivered from the power of the grave, are received into glory, and enjoy, for ever, a full and perfect communion with all the blessed society of heaven.

That these invaluable blessings are imparted to, and bestowed upon the true members of the Christian Church, and, that your belief in this gospel doctrine is very properly required, will be shewn in the following discourse. I shall, first, endeavour to explain the sense of this article, as it is made a part of your creed,—secondly, remind you, as I have hitherto done, of the scriptural authority on which it is

founded,—and, lastly, point out and impress the influence, that it ought to produce on your faith and practice.

The first information that we are to acquire, in the discussion of the present subject, is—who are the Saints, or with whom is maintained the fellowship mentioned in this article of our creed? And the meaning of the term, in its primary signification, may be clearly collected from the characters of those holy men, who lived in the infancy of the christian church, and who are thus represented in the Acts of the Apostles. “They were all together: they had all things in common:—they sold their possessions, and parted with their goods to all men, as every man had need. They continued steadfast in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer.”—From this representation we draw the following conclusion—“that those early Christians, or Saints, were exemplary for their piety, their charity and their faith,—and that these prevailing evidences of the sincerity of their religion were the foundation, and cementing bond of their fellowship with each other.

The circumstances of the Christian church becoming soon materially and unavoidably altered, of course, the term Saint received a more extensive meaning, and was applied, and continues still to be so, to that great body of Christians, who acknowledge our Saviour as their head, are holy in their

lives and conversation, and are sanctified by the Spirit through Jesus Christ. After the Gospel had been preached in Asia, and churches had been planted all around Judea, we find the Apostle Paul, that active minister of the Gentiles, directing several of his Epistles to the Saints, which were at Ephesus, at Philippi, and at Colosse—that is, to the bodies of Christians who belonged to those places, and who constituted the churches to which the Apostle had written. And well might those pious converts deserve the appellation of Saint, or holy—for, they had received a principle of true and inward sanctity, they had voluntarily separated themselves from profane and idolatrous worship, and devoutly acknowledged the true God, through Jesus Christ.

The term Saint, then, in this part of the Creed, is not to be applied to all persons, who are pleased to style themselves of the Holy Catholic church,—nor is it to be assumed by any individual set of men, according to their own pleasure and discretion. This eminent distinction can only be acquired in these two ways;—first, in respect of that holy faith, by which they are regenerated:—For, writes Saint John—“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God”—by which faith, they are purified,—“God himself purifying their hearts by faith:”—whereby “they are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,” “in whom

also after that they believed, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit."

And, secondly, they acquire this distinction by their gospel conversation, making their lives and practices correspond with their profession. "For, as He, who hath called them is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conversation—adding to their faith virtue,—and to virtue knowledge—and to knowledge temperance,—and to temperance patience—and to patience brotherly kindness—and to brotherly kindness charity—that they may be neither barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Such are the true Saints of the church of Christ. They are holy with respect to their faith—and they are holy with respect to their lives, or conversation.—Over them, death has no power. For, instead of losing their sanctity by the tyranny of that last enemy, it becomes permanently and essentially improved,—for "corruption puts on incorruption, and weakness glory," and, through that final event in nature, from being "Saints" on earth, they become Saints in heaven, from being members of the church militant here, they are made members of the church triumphant hereafter.

After this explanation of the term Saint, I proceed to shew, with whom these holy persons have communion—which consoling information we shall

readily derive from the sacred writings. And, as I advance, I request you never to lose sight of this important fact, that I am not so much endeavouring to maintain the favourite doctrine of a particular church, as to relate faithfully to you—the divine authority, on which that doctrine is received into our venerable and apostolic establishment.

We may observe, then, that the Saints of God have fellowship with the Father, according to Saint John's assurance in the text—"that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye have fellowship with us:—and truly our fellowship is with the Father." Saint Paul, also, assures the Ephesians, "that though they were formerly without God in the world, and strangers from the covenant of promise, they were now made nigh by the blood of Christ, and, were no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints and household of God: inheriting the same promises, and partaking of the divine nature." Thrice happy will you be, if you enjoy this unspeakable privilege! From God the Father, you will then have communicated unto you, his wisdom to direct you,—his power to defend you, his mercy to save you, and his glory to exalt you. And to that sovereign Being you may safely impart all your sorrows, all your troubles, and all your wants in every time of need. "I sought the Lord," says holy David, "and he heard me, yea he delivered me out of all my trouble."—"Acquaint

yourselves then with God and be at peace." "Oh cast all your care upon Him, who careth for you."

The Saints of God, who live in his holy church, have, in the next place, communion with the Son, for, indeed, as we are all sinners, and enemies of God, without an interest in the merits of Christ, we could have no fellowship with the Father. This comfortable doctrine does not depend upon a fallacious foundation, but, is explicitly taught in the divine writings. Saint John assures us, for instance, in the text, that such as have communion with the Father, have the same mystical union with the Son. "Truly," such are the words of the Evangelist, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And in his second Epistle he declares "that such as abide in the doctrine of Christ, have both the Father and the Son,"—and, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Saint Paul writes, "that God had called them to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."—And thrice happy are they, also, who are in communion with the ever-blessed Son of God and Saviour of the world! To such he imparts that living bread, which came down from heaven, by the preaching of his word, and by the devout use of his sacraments.—They, also, receive from that fellowship, which they had forfeited, but which they have again obtained by his precious death, the favor of God, the pardon of their sins,—and eternal glory after death. "For he that

hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." God, in his mercy, therefore, grant that no power, visible, or invisible, may be able to divide us from this spiritual union, but, that we may evermore dwell in Christ, and Christ in us!

The Saints of God, again, are dignified with another communion, and, that is, with the third Person, in the ever-blessed Trinity. For this reason Saint Paul exhorted the Philippians to unity and mutual love, by the "fellowship of the Spirit."—And, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he prays,—that "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," might be with them. And so essential is that communion, that it is expressly declared—"that if a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And thrice happy also, are they "whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and who live in fellowship with that blessed Spirit!"—In such believers the power of sin is gradually weakened, and the fruits of holiness are progressively produced.—By that divine Spirit, the heart of the hard is softened,—and the eye of the blind cleared from its obstructing film. The fallen child of Adam beholds the enormity and the danger of sin.—He is enabled to mortify the deeds of the flesh, has holy devises and good resolutions inspired and assisted,—and is finally united with Christ, the "author and finisher" of our Salvation.

From the sacred scriptures, we also learn, that the

Saints of God have communion with the highest order of created beings, namely with the angels of heaven. These servants of the Most High, "are sent forth," says the Apostle, to minister "to them who shall be heirs of salvation." Although we are unacquainted with the particular offices of their ministration, yet—we are not without many instances of their zeal to God, and their good-will towards men. Angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner. Angels carried the soul of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom.—Angels appeared to Christ in the scene of his temptation, and in the hour of his agony and bloody sweat. An angel opened the doors of the prison, in which Saint Peter was confined, and brought him forth by the hand.—And, at the last tremendous day, angels are to sever the righteous from the wicked, and to see the just sentence of God strictly executed, according to his unerring will and power.

That those spiritual Beings are also interested in, and employed about our personal safety, is certain, because our blessed Lord has told us so, in one of his discourses with his disciples.—"Take heed," said He "that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven." Or, in other words, so much love has the Almighty for little children, that he gives to his angels a special charge for their safety,—and those

guardians of his fatherly care, being always in his presence, are ready, though he needs them not, to report in what manner children are treated in this life, and to execute vengeance upon those who injure and despise them. And, if little children are so immediately under the protection of their Father in heaven, we may reasonably infer, that the Saints of God, who resemble them in innocence and purity, and who live in the Church of Christ, have also their ministering angels around them, who become more and more mindful of their charge, the more they behold them using the means of divine grace, and striving by every exertion in their power to present themselves "a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God."

And great is the consolation that arises from the knowledge of this circumstance. For to know that in all our paths and difficulties,—whether we rise up to labor, or repose ourselves to rest, that we have a ministering spirit near us, who is our guardian angel,—invisibly preserving us from danger, and directing us to that, which will ultimately prove our happiness—must afford us infinite consolation, and elevate our souls above every earthly fear! We are most strictly forbidden, indeed, by the word of God to worship angels, yet, we are authorized to acknowledge with gratitude that holy communion, which exists between angelic spirits and all good men. And we may safely pray, in the language of our venerable church,

“that as the angels always do God service in heaven,” so, by the same divine appointment, they may succour and defend us upon earth.

Thus you perceive with what strict propriety you may repeat after your minister—“I believe in the communion of saints,”—that is, I believe that holy men have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and, also, with the angels of God, in the holy Catholic church of Christ,—into which church I was received, at my baptism, “and made a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

There remain, now, but two more senses, in which the communion of saints, in the Apostles’ Creed, is to be admitted. The first is, that there is a communion with each other upon earth,—and the second is, the communion, which they have with the Saints who are departed out of this world, and are received into the mansions of everlasting life. That the true members of the church of Christ have communion here with each other, requires but little evidence to establish. “For, if we walk in the light,” says Saint John, “we have fellowship one with another.” And, my beloved brethren, how pleasing is the conviction, that there is a real household of faith to which we belong! How animating is the reflection, that, wherever this household may be fixed, or in what form soever it may remain, it has but one Author who will be with it to the

end of the world! How delightful, how encouraging is the assurance that we may enjoy the same ordinances may look forward to the same everlasting promises, be endued with the same spiritual graces, and may hold and acknowledge the same head, "from which, all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increases with the increase of God!"

The contemplation of such an earthly communion in the Jewish church, impelled the inspired penman to exclaim with ecstasy—"Behold how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And, surely, when as members of a pure and universal church, we contemplate the holy fellowship that exists in so many instances therein, and would to God there were no exceptions! when we reflect how many good men worship the same God, in Jesus Christ, how many are sanctified by the same spirit, are nourished by the same word and ordinance, and are ardently desirous to promote each other's good,—kindly instructing the ignorant, admonishing the wanderers from their parents' home, tenderly supporting the weak and aged, and gently soothing the afflicted soul;—we must perceive the happiness, which the Almighty designed for us as social creatures in this life, and the perfect state of felicity that we may reach, through Christ, in the life to come; and we shall exclaim—"the Lord has been very merciful to us—and we

will praise his holy name, from this time for ever more."

The last sense, in which the communion of saints is to be received is this—that the saints of God—living in the church of Christ, have communion with the saints departed out of this world, who are admitted into the presence of the Lord.—The church of Christ, to which all his sincere followers belong, is not confined to this present state. The saints on earth and the saints in heaven, make but one mystical body, consequently there exists a communion, a correspondence, which cannot be dissolved by death. All that are in Christ, whether living, or departed, whether in earth, or in heaven, have their souls nourished by one spiritual influence, and are joined together by one common bond. Accordingly, Saint Paul addresses himself to those, in the following manner, who are called to the Christian faith.—“Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to the Judge of all,—and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” As if the Apostle had said—“by your Christian vocation you are united to the body of your fellow Christians, whose warfare is now finished, and whose crown has been conferred. They are justified and accepted as

righteous, through the Captain of their salvation, and have been presented to the throne of mercy spotless, by the blood of the Lamb."

To this most interesting and instructive point have we been conducted by the sacred scripture, and, when that safe guide ceases to direct us, we should immediately suspend our inquiries, and not vainly attempt to be "wise above that which is written." If we are, at present, ignorant what the departed spirits do in the realms of light, and are forbidden to make them the objects of our worship, or our intercession—still this religious doctrine has its use and consolation. For, we may rejoice in their happiness, and render God thanks for the grace bestowed upon them, and which enabled them to obtain the crown of life. "We may bless his holy name for all his servants departed this life in his faith and fear."—Those objects who were near to our hearts, either by the ties of nature, or the bonds of love—and we may pray for grace, so to follow their good examples, that, this life ended, we may be partakers with them of his heavenly kingdom."

Thus I have attempted to illustrate the sense, in which the term Saint is to be received in the Apostles' Creed, and to shew with whom the saints of God, in the church of Christ, have communion. You perceive, no doubt, that this part of a Christian's faith is easy of acceptance,—and that, upon the

authority of scripture, and after the example of the most religious men, you may safely believe in the "communion of saints." A term of such infinite distinction, a mark of such surpassing honor, a seal of such glorious pre-eminence, should be sought after by every effort that you can make. For besides possessing the privileges, which good men enjoy upon earth from this fellowship, the title of respect will follow you beyond the grave, and, at the day of general account, will distinguish you as belonging to that blessed number who have accepted the means of grace, and who wait to receive an immortal crown.

Feebly as the consolation and benefits of this communion have been described, yet the faint representation, which I have given of the joys of the blessed saints, has made you, I trust, desirous to know, which was the last point to be considered—what you must do, to be admitted into, and to be continued in that communion. The line of conduct is most plain, and, if adopted, most certain of success. Constantly attend, for instance, on the public instruction of the church of Christ. Join devoutly in its holy worship, its sacraments, its discipline, and take especial care that your conversation be such as becomes the Gospel you profess,—and that you walk worthy of Him, who has called you into his kingdom and glory!

Would to God! that such as think lightly of this glorious inheritance, if any such be present, might

be prevailed upon to consider, before it be too late, the unavoidable consequence of neglecting such great salvation, and of being numbered with the children of darkness, instead of being ranked with the Saints in light. How distracting then would be your affliction—how dreadful beyond the powers of language to express, or even imagination to conceive, would be your consternation! With the deepest agony of soul you would say, perhaps,—is this the society, is this the communion to which I was appointed? Is this the glory which was ordained for me, miserable, senseless creature! I have renounced the honor and happiness of my existence! I have estranged myself from my Redeemer and my God! I have separated myself from every good and glorious being throughout creation! I am come, not to the courts of God—not to the blessings of his presence—not to pleasure for evermore—but, to chains and to darkness—to wailing and gnashing of teeth—to accursed spirits, and to Satan, their first-born, and most indefatigable agent of misery and malice.

Such of you, however, as have chosen the better part, retire to your homes with the consolation of your religion. Think—think—on the privileges of being Saints of God!—Think on the joys that are laid up for you in heaven! You may exclaim, “let my condition be ever so poor, ever so abject, ever so afflicted, I am still heir,—not to uncertain riches,—

but to the uncorroding treasures of eternity. When the world frowns on me, I can withdraw myself from it, and hold communion with the glorious inhabitants of heaven, and with Jesus Christ himself. When I am under affliction, I can look upwards, and with the eye of faith, contemplate the example of the departed Saints, who are interested in my warfare, and who are anxiously expecting my deliverance. What, in short, should sorely distress me, when I know that my Redeemer liveth! When I feel assured, that my soul will soon be beyond the precincts of mortality, where it will possess that glorious inheritance, which was purchased for all the true members of the holy catholic church, and which will be conferred on all who endeavour to live holy, as becometh Saints.

May we be able to apply these consolations to ourselves for the sake of Jesus Christ!

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Romans 3d, 23d.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

It was one principal object of Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to prove the necessity of the gospel dispensation, by shewing, that all mankind had sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The Gentiles, for instance, who, from the visible creation, might have inferred an invisible Creator, and who, indeed, did, to a certain degree, entertain just notions of his perfections, instead of pursuing and improving such inferences of reason, and shewing their gratitude for such discoveries of a first cause, “glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves wise they became fools, and changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,”

and, consequently, were involved under the guilt of sin. And the selfapproving members of the Jewish nation were not less implicated in the condemnation of the Apostle, for, although they boasted of their exact knowledge of the law, and of being guides to the ignorant, yet did they "despise the goodness of God, which should have led them to repentance," and rejected the means of grace, which were offered to them by Jesus Christ in the Gospel. They were, therefore, more deeply involved in sin, than their gentile brethren, according to the well known rule of scripture,—“to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”

Having proved the guilt of all mankind, the Apostle quotes an exact description of the sinful and unjustified state of both Jew and Gentile from the Psalms of David. “It is written,” says he, “there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongue they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Now what remedy was there against this uni-

versal depravity? Could the law, on which the boasting Jew depended, exempt him from punishment?—No, affirms the Apostle. The law, indeed, gave a more accurate knowledge of sin, but could not save the transgressor from its effects. But though the law itself, could not offer salvation it testified of another mode, which is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and the only way vouchsafed to fallen man of being saved. “The righteousness of God without the law is manifested,” continues Saint Paul, “being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood: to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus.” Such is the doctrine connected with the subject of my text, and I have recited it thus fully, because it expresses the same article of faith, as that which is contained in the portion of the Apostles’ Creed at which we are now arrived. My last discourse, you may remember, treated of the first of the four benefits, which God bestows upon his Catholic church,—namely, the joyful communion and fellowship which the saints have with each other, and with Jesus Christ their head.

My present one, will explain to you the second benefit, that is, the forgiveness of sins. A doctrine of the very utmost consequence to our peace and comfort here, and to our eternal happiness hereafter. For every serious individual who examines his conduct candidly, and without reserve, will find that he has to reproach himself with many violations of the law of God and of his conscience,—and will clearly see, that unless there be some way, by which his sins will be forgiven, and his soul be justified, there can be left “for him nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.” But, blessed be God! this is not the present condition of mankind. “Comfort ye,—comfort ye, my ‘people,’” saith your God. “Speak ye comfortably, and say unto them, their warfare is accomplished and their iniquity is pardoned. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Despond not, then, thou fearful and trembling soul, whom conscience convicts of sin, and whom reason makes afraid of judgment! Hear with attention, and behold with joy, what assurance there is of pardon in this world, and of endless felicity hereafter! “For although all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, still

there is mercy with Him and plenteous redemption."

"I believe" repeats the devout Christian, "in the forgiveness of sins." And, in order to convince you that you do rightly in making this article of the Creed a part of your belief, I shall propose to your consideration these two scriptural doctrines,—first, the nature of sin,—and secondly, the nature of the forgiveness promised to it, through Jesus Christ.

To perceive the nature of sin, I must refer you to the written word of God, as usual, that only infallible guide of human actions—which defines it to be "the transgression of the law." "Whosoever," writes Saint John, "committeth sin transgresseth against the law." Had there been no law, there would have been no transgression. But, as there is a law which was given by the Supreme Governor of the world, who has a right to frame laws, and to punish those who break them, that law is made the rule of our actions, and every deviation from it, becomes a sin. Upon this just principle every deed, word, or thought, that is prohibited by the law of God, every omission of duty that is required by a positive command, every evil habit that opposes the holiness that is enjoined, every corrupt inclination of the soul, which leads us to leave undone that which is commanded, and to do that which is forbidden,—all these commissions and omissions are sins, because they either transgress, or are in oppo-

sition to, the law of God.—As, then, so much is required from every child of Adam, surely none of us can presume to say that we have committed no sin. But, this is not the only consequence that follows,—for—were it possible for us to leave off committing sin—the guilt of those offences, which we had before incurred, would still remain, and render us deserving of punishment.—The act itself might cease, but the pollution contracted by it would not be done away. And in this sense, these passages of sacred scripture are to be received.—“When we do ill, sin lieth at the door.”—“Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be liable to the judgment.”—“Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be liable to the council.”—“Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be liable to hell fire.” By these authorities, we clearly perceive the dreadful nature of sin,—and, that had there been no remission, or forgiveness of it, the guilt of every offence that we have committed would still have remained, and have exposed us to everlasting punishment.

Here it will be necessary to revert to the fall of Adam, in order to learn how sin came into the world, and from what cause our first parents, and all their posterity fell under the sentence of death. As soon, then, as God had created Adam he entered into covenant with him, and in him, with all mankind. But, before the covenant, God had imparted

to his creature these three essential qualities to enable him to preserve it; first a law, written on his heart, which taught him all that he had to do,—secondly a positive law, which restricted him from the fruit of one particular tree in the garden of Eden,—and thirdly, perfect strength and requisite ability to perform the conditions that were enjoined, and, consequently,—a possibility of his having lived for ever without committing sin. In possession of these mercies, the Almighty promised him, that if he walked in the light and radiance of the strength, which had been vouchsafed unto him, that He would continue to him the possession of the mercies that he had received—that He would preserve within him light and strength to direct and assist him in the performance of perfect obedience—and would reward such performance with everlasting felicity.

The Almighty performed his part of the covenant, though, alas! my brethren, as we know to our sorrow, Adam did not. He neither walked in the light, nor made use of the strength imparted, but transgressed the command of God.—He ate of the forbidden tree—was driven out of Paradise—condemned to eternal death—and deprived of everlasting happiness. From that fatal moment he forfeited the perfect light and strength, which were given at his creation, and became defective in knowledge, and destitute of ability to perform his duty to his

Maker. Nor did the misery of his fall involve and contaminate him alone, but he imparted the corruption of his nature, and all its baneful consequences to the very last of his posterity that shall be born. The light of the Holy Spirit, by which they would have been enabled to know, and to perform their duty, was immediately withdrawn.—Their reason became perverted, and wholly inadequate to guide them into the way of truth and salvation.—Their will and affections were corrupted and ungovernable, and they were obnoxious to every variety of temptation and sin. A just and holy God could not now behold with pleasure the work of his hand, because it was no longer “very good”—nor would he have restored again the children of Adam to his favour, had not a way been provided, by which his unerring justice could be satisfied, and a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice offered for the wilful breach of this first covenant, which God made with man.

Such, my brethren, is the nature of Sin, and such were the miserable consequences of Adam’s disobedience! But though “all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God”—there is, as Saint Paul assures us, which introduces the next subject we are to notice, “a remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,—that He might be just,—and the justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus Christ.”

This redemption from, and forgiveness of past sin

—are acts of God's infinite mercy towards fallen men,—because sin being a transgression of the law of God, the injury is committed against the framer of the law—that is against God Almighty ;—and, therefore, the punishment, which should follow, is due from that exalted and super-eminent Being. As we referred to sacred scripture to learn the nature, and the consequences of sin, so must we apply to the same sacred source for our information respecting the nature of this forgiveness or remission, of sins.—And there we shall find it spoken of, as the releasing from a debt, as expiating, reconciling, as lifting up, taking away, pardoning, and indulging.—All of which terms relate to the forgiveness of sins.

We find that after Adam had violated his covenant with God, and had brought sin, and misery, and death into the world, a way was graciously provided, for God in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, by which the consequences of that violation should be done away, and mankind be placed in a capacity of attaining everlasting happiness. A second covenant was made with Adam in these words—“the seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent's head,”—which deliverance was afterward more plainly promised to Abraham, in the assurance, “that in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed,”—and, in succeeding ages, it was repeated in still clearer and more distinct indi-

cations. Our Saviour Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, it was, who, in the fullness of time, should "bruise the serpent's head," and become a blessing to all nations.—As, however, there could be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood—accordingly the Messiah, who is peculiarly the seed of the woman, appeared in the world a voluntary sacrifice for sin. He took our nature upon Him, and so became a second Adam. In that nature He performed a perfect and unsinning obedience to God, and thereby answered all the conditions of the first covenant.—And, being faultless, by an ignominious death upon the cross He made satisfaction for the sins of Adam, and for those of his posterity.—“He tasted of death for every man,”—and, as the Apostle writes, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians—“he died for all those, who were dead in Adam.”

This is the scriptural account of the fall, and the remedy appointed to restore a lost world—and we may truly say with Saint Paul, “that God has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” “When we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, making peace through the blood of his cross by Him, to reconcile all things to himself.”

From this reference to a divine revelation, which so nearly concerns us all,—and the knowlege of which should afford us the greatest consolation, we may further learn, that the forgiveness of sins promised

in the Gospel and declared in the Apostles' Creed, contains these two points of doctrine: First, a reconciliation with an offended God;—and secondly, a complete satisfaction unto a just God.

It contains a reconciliation with an offended God. God was angry with the whole race of Adam before the death of his Son Jesus Christ; but, upon the death of his only and beloved Son, He became reconciled,—and accepted of the voluntary and efficient sacrifice of that divine person, as a propitiation for our sins.—“For,” says Saint Paul, “we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God sent forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. We have an advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation of our sins.”

With respect to the second point of doctrine, there can be no wonder that the precious blood of Christ was a complete satisfaction,—or, that the Father should be reconciled to sinners by the death of his only begotten Son,—when the sufferings, which our blessed Saviour endured, as an expiation for our sins, did so fully and so perfectly answer the will, and justice of the Almighty. “The son of man,” observes Christ himself “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Men were justly doomed to suffer such punishments, as were proportioned to their offences—“All had sinned,” and were subject

to death, which is "the wages of sin."—They were in captivity and bonds, from the guilt of sin, and to release them from their chains and fetters, Christ gave his life as a ransom—and his blood as a price. For it is in this sense, that the ransom is to be taken, which implies, an equivalent price, by way of redemption, a price to purchase that, which is legally detained,—or, to release that which is justly in bondage.—"Ye are bought with a price," says the Apostle.—"It is the Lord who bought us, for we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ."

As, moreover, the iniquity and enormity of sin, increase in proportion to the goodness and dignity of the person offended, so—the value of its price and compensation is enhanced by the goodness and dignity of the person who makes atonement, or satisfaction. The Father God Almighty, against whom we had sinned,—is of divine power, and of infinite Majesty and glory. And of the same divinity also, is the Son Jesus Christ, who suffered to redeem us. Thus, then, although God may be truly said to have forgiven our sins, yet, cannot He be declared to have done so, without having received the price that was demanded. The Almighty, in his inflexible justice required, and did receive the ransom of our redemption in the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, who suffered death upon the cross, "for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the

shadow of death, that He might make us the children of God and exalt us to everlasting life." It is, then, by Jesus Christ alone, whose goodness and dignity infinitely increase the value of the gift, that we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins!

From these sacred revelations, which are to be found in our Bible, we learn the doctrine of this part of the Apostles' Creed, together with the several particulars that belong to it. We learn, for instance, why it is that God forgives our sins—and in what their remission consists.—We learn, also, that the most complete repentance, that man could present, would not have been sufficient to have restored him to the favor of the Almighty, and that his pardon and salvation do not, in any degree, depend upon himself, but, solely on the merits and intercession of our merciful Redeemer. This Saviour, as I have before observed, had been promised, in general terms, before the flood, and He came in that season, which infinite wisdom saw best, and taught his followers the most perfect precepts of piety and virtue,—precepts, which He enforced by the efficacy of his own illustrious example. And, having, patiently and with all humility, borne the sorrows and the miseries of this mortal life, He submitted, for us men and for our salvation, to a painful and ignominious death. This voluntary sacrifice, His offended Father accepted, and, for the sake of his blessed Son, entered into covenant with all, who shall own Him,

as their Redeemer, and be obedient to the laws of the Gospel.

At the first establishment of the Christian dispensation, the remission of sins was preached in the name of Christ to both Jews and Gentiles. They were exhorted to repent truly of their former sins, and to enter into the church by baptism. "Repent ye," said the Apostles, "and be baptized, that your sins may be blotted out."—"And, be it known unto you, that through this man, even through Him, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again from the dead, is preached unto you the remission of sins; by which, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

In this way was the remission of sins preached to the first converts of the Gospel. We, who live at this distance of time from that glorious æra, are taught to seek for forgiveness in the holy catholic church of Christ, by baptism—and to believe, that we have those sins remitted of which we were guilty, before we were baptized.—"For, Christ," says Saint Paul to the Ephesians, "does sanctify his church by the washing of water."—And, having been once made members of that church, we may receive the remission of sins committed after baptism, by our sincere repentance. Such, no doubt, is the frailty of human nature, that with all the instructions to obedience contained in the Gospel, and

with all the helps to holiness of life afforded by Jesus Christ, man will remain subject to transgression, and occasionally yield to the temptations of the "world, the flesh and the devil." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Still, my brethren, we possess a gracious remedy against these enemies of our peace. To correct the mournful consequences of the fall, our divine Master gave us his excellent form of prayer, and, instituted the sacrament of the last supper—that by the one, we may implore the forgiveness of our daily offences, and, by the other, be received into the favour of God, and be confirmed and strengthened in our resolutions to lead a holy life. This is the knowledge, this is the comfort, that we derive from the blessed Gospel. We are enabled to discover our inward sins, and to find and apply a remedy against them. So long as we continue in this state, we are liable to commit sin, and when we do—and who of us does not? we may turn to God with sorrow and contrition, to be renewed by his grace, and to be pardoned by his mercy.—In a word, the church of Christ offers the forgiveness of original sins, by the laver of regeneration,—and, afterwards, in our Saviour's name, the forgiveness of actual sins, upon the profession of the true faith, and upon our unfeigned repentance.

After this brief, and scriptural relation of the

nature of sins, and of their forgiveness—I trust you perceive the great propriety of the insertion of this article in the confession of our faith, and acknowledge, with gratitude, this gospel privilege to be one of the most important of those blessings, that are conferred upon every worthy member of the church of Christ.

Reflecting, now, upon the doctrine, which has been the subject of our present meditations, you will confess the great mercy of God, in Jesus Christ, in thus redeeming us from the curse of the law, and placing us again in a capacity of salvation. “Blessed is the man,” exclaims the Psalmist, “to whom the Lord will impute no sin.” While you are engaged in the active scenes of life, while immersed in the pleasures, or the business of the world, with passions so corrupt by nature, and with minds usually so regardless of the events of futurity—too many of you, it is to be feared, like the Greeks of old, may deem the “preaching of the cross of Christ—foolishness.” But, when, my brethren, sickness, when the sudden, or the long protracted wastings of disease, when the evident decline of life, though alas! the aged are not always thoughtful, involve you in the shades of death—then, you cannot turn from the consequences of a sinful life—then you will behold the objects of this scene through a different medium—then you will discover what was the punishment due to sin, and which was entailed upon

Adam's posterity by his transgression, and you will own and feel the nature and value of the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ. You will know, that had not the ever-blessed Son of God performed the conditions, which He voluntarily did, and which His Father, in strict justice, required, you would never have been released from the obligation contracted by sin. Then you will see realized—and heaven grant, it may not be to your sorrow and condemnation! that, by giving Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, He, thereby, rendered God propitious to his rebellious creatures, took upon himself their merited punishment, and, by that merciful act, laid upon them a new and everlasting obligation to obedience. Think then seriously, upon these unspeakable mercies! Mercies, which were vouchsafed to your immortal souls, when under the wrath of your offended Maker, and determine whether you can praise and magnify Him too much, who took upon himself the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.—“Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, for ever laud and magnify his glorious name, saying, glory be to thee O Lord, most High.”

As, again, the knowledge of this doctrine should inspire our hearts with praise and thanksgiving to the author of such great and inestimable benefits, so should it be an inducement to holiness of life.

"We are not our own," says the Apostle, "but are bought with a price." In the first covenant with Adam there were conditions, to the performance of which was promised eternal life. And in the second covenant we have engagements to discharge, in order to become partakers with the saints in heaven. We are to be fervent and frequent in prayer to God, for light to know our duty and for grace to perform it. We are to keep his sabbaths sacred, by withdrawing from the customary engagements of life, and by attending his places of worship,—where we may be instructed in the way of salvation. We are to be constant at the Lord's table, where his precious death is commemorated, and where invisible help is imparted for perfecting a spiritual life. And we are to avoid every temptation to sin, and strive to the utmost of the power given us to act, as becometh those, who do not receive the grace of God in vain.

And, lastly, this doctrine affords the greatest consolation to every contrite sinner—a doctrine, which the sacred scriptures have revealed in numberless instances, and by which we believe that there is no sin so great, which God, in his infinite mercy, will not pardon for Christ's sake on our sincere repentance. Behold how graciously David was forgiven, though guilty of such atrocious and complicated iniquities! How meekly was Saint Peter reproved, —and how kindly was he pardoned, after he had

denied his Master in his most afflicted condition! How tenderly was the persecuting spirit of the great Apostle of the Gentiles reprovèd, and exhorted to forbearance! And, if any set of men, had reason to despair of pardon, they surely must have done so, who deliberately stained their hands in the blood of their Redeemer. Yet, when they inquired of Saint Peter, what they must do to be saved?—they were not told, that there was no mercy for them—and that the door of heaven was closed against them, but they were admonished to “repent,” and to be “baptized,” in order to obtain remission of their sins.

“Let then the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him.” And do not depend upon any other time, than the present, to seek the Lord, for that time may never arrive,—or should it arrive, you may not be able to find Him though you seek him with bitter tears and supplication. Look around you and see how many thoughtless souls are daily carried to their long home, without any preparation for eternity, and say, what reason, what security, you have to depend upon another day? Knowing, then, perhaps by the most painful visitations that can occur, the uncertainty of life,—and, assured, by the word of God, that, without repentance, our actual sins will never be forgiven,

where is your hope of being happy hereafter, if you do not instantly endeavour to make your peace with God?

Consider these things, my brethren, and prove yourselves Christians. You are instructed in the way of being happy, through the merits of Christ, for ever and ever—do not, then, by your supineness and ingratitude, become the authors and finishers of your own everlasting misery!

THE
RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

2 Cor. 5th, 10th.

“ We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

WHOEVER attentively considers the order that is preserved in the Apostles' Creed, with respect to the arrangement of its several and important doctrines, will perceive it to be both natural and judicious,—beginning with the first Almighty cause of every created being, visible and invisible, and ending with the consequences of a well, or ill spent life, in the everlasting world that is to come. The existence of God, the Maker of heaven and earth—His adorable attributes, and the manifestations of his power, as displayed in the construction, in the guidance, and, in the preservation of the magnificent and boundless works of the Creation, compose the first portion of this summary of our faith. Next in succession are presented to our attention those

doctrines, which relate to the ever-blessed author of our salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord, by which we are successively reminded of His birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and final coming to judgment, and then follow the existence and agency of the third person in ever-blessed Trinity, under whose sanctifying influence an holy and universal church is formed, in which sincere believers have their sins forgiven, are raised from the dead, and are rewarded with everlasting life, in the kingdom of God and his Christ.

The article that I have next in order to present to your meditation, contains a doctrine of the very utmost importance to every sincere believer in Jesus, namely, the resurrection of his body and soul from the grave,—a doctrine, which declares, that, at the summons of the Almighty God, we shall rise again from the dust of the grave—that our souls shall be re-admitted into our bodies, which shall be made capable to receive them by the power of God, and that, in them, we shall experience an eternity either of happiness, or of misery, as we shall be found to have died in our sins, or in fervent and unfeigned repentance. Consolatory as this doctrine is to the best feelings of our nature—congenial as it is to reason—agreeable to the attributes of the god-head—and firmly as it is established by Revelation, and supported by the concurrent testimony of the most impartial amongst mankind—yet, there is no

scriptural truth, which has been at times, more warmly disputed, or more strenuously denied. Saint Paul, you remember, was accounted "mad" by the noble Festus, and a "babbler," and a "setter forth of strange gods," by the most learned characters at Athens, for venturing to preach Jesus and the resurrection. Nor should it be a subject of surprize, that many have been found since the period of the Apostles' preaching, even down to this very day, who oppose this article of our Christian faith—because, wicked men must ever be anxious to refute a doctrine, which places such restraint upon the indulgence of their darling passions, and which alarms their consciences with the just punishment that awaits the conclusion of an immoral life.

But, whatever past, or existing opposition may be arrayed against this doctrine, every true member of the church of Christ, must believe in the resurrection of the body—or, as it is stated in the Nicene Creed, a phrase which, though somewhat differently expressed, embraces the same point of faith—"he must look for, and depend on the resurrection of the dead." And, my brethren, when I shall have shewn, that the belief of this doctrine does not involve any impossibility—any thing improbable—or, that is inconsistent with the religion of the Gospel, you will admit the assertion of Saint Paul, in the text, with all faith and assurance; and you will, moreover, be induced so to live that you may expe-

rience the approbation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "when you appear before his judgment seat, to receive the things that are done in the body, according to that which you have done, whether it be good or bad."

You will afford me, then, your usual attention to this awful subject. And may the God of all grace enable me to place it in so convincing a point of view, that in future, among the other subjects of your petitions, you may implore his all powerful influence to impress this solemn doctrine on your heart—and to assist you to live like those, who, when they depart this life, will die in hope, rest in peace, and rise in glory!

In the first place, then, "the resurrection of the body," cannot be thought a thing impossible, although it was objected to by the antient philosophers, and was unknown to the heathen world. Were, indeed, the power of raising the dead ascribed to men, or to angels, its impossibility might be justly alleged;—but, as it is confined to the supreme Being, whose justice, goodness, and might, are infinite, and to whom, as Christ declares "all things are possible," we must allow that every difficulty is removed which opposes our belief in this important doctrine.

On this point in truth, however, the objections of the most eminent philosophers are of very mean authority, for we read, that the same men doubted

even the possibility of the creation—and introduced into their system of morals absurdities the most gross and evident. But why should it be thought impossible for God to raise the dead? How great and stupendous were His operations when this world was first made?—When the spirit of the omnipotent moved upon, and arranged the elements of this enormous mass? When God said “there be light, and there was light?” When the same Almighty first commanded that man should be made—and man was made in the “image of God?” Surely the same divine hand which formed our bodies out of nothing; can bring together again the scattered particles, which are mouldered in mortality, and endue them with a new and better life. To ascribe, indeed, to the Father of all things the attribute of omnipotence, and yet to deny his power of raising the dead—is to argue most absurdly, and to maintain a self-evident contradiction.—But, if we submit to the dictates of reason, and unfeignedly acknowledge the uncontrollable power of the God, whom we worship, every difficulty and absurdity will be instantly removed:—and then, whether the dust into which our bodies moulder after death, lie undisturbed in the grave, or be wafted to the farthest extremity of the globe, every particle of our perished frames is equally under the eye of the omniscient, and equally in the power of the omnipotent God. Every place whether upon the surface, or deep within the

caverns of the earth, visible, or invisible, is but the storehouse and depository of the Lord of all ;—and, on the morning of eternity the sacred trust shall be restored—for, as the same Jonas came out of the belly of the whale, and the same Son of man from the heart of the earth—so will the same bodies of men arise, and appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

As the resurrection of the body and soul is clearly possible for the supreme Being to accomplish, I proceed, in the second place, to shew that it is an event extremely probable, and such an instance of divine power as may be most naturally expected.

Human nature is composed of two distinct principles, one of which is the mind, or soul, by the operations of which we are enabled to resolve upon, and perform the various functions of life, and which so decidedly proves our great superiority over every creature of this lower world ; and the other is the body, which is directed by the former, and framed especially to be its companion. Of the corruption of our bodies, produced by the transgression of our first parents, no proof need to be advanced. It is a truth which every knell proclaims, and which every new made grave confirms. Now, my brethren, if we deny the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh, how can we account for the arrangement of the Almighty, in giving man a pre-eminence over the beasts of the field, in respect to

the faculties of reason, and yet sink him lower than that part of the creation in the advantages of bodily strength, and duration of his being here. Our observation must have frequently reminded us, that there are many creatures, which, in these particulars, are much superior to ourselves. There are birds, which fly through the vast expanse of air—there are fishes, which swim in the paths of the great sea—there are beasts, that graze upon the land—nay, there are even vegetables, which are the lowest order of the creation, that far outlive the sons of men, and appear, in some respects, to pass a more desirable existence. But surely, it is not probable that an all wise, and all just God, would have permitted such a degrading difference to prevail, had He not designed, at some future period, that the soul should re-tenant the body in a spiritual and more glorious condition, and be placed in its appropriate superiority over the brutes that perish.

Before, again, we deny the probability of this gospel truth, it will be incumbent on us to revert to some of those numerous absurdities, which must necessarily follow from such denial—absurdities, which when duly weighed, we should certainly be ashamed to acknowledge. The sacred historian of the Jewish dispensation, for example, has recorded the approbation, which the Almighty expressed towards the conduct of Abel—by saying, “that the Lord had a respect unto Abel and his offering.”—

Now, if the piety of Abel had not received a recompense in another life, and the incense of his sacrifice had not prepared his way to heaven, the hatred of Cain to him would have been, in all respects, more prejudicial, and more productive of misery, than the declared approbation of the Almighty was either serviceable in this life, or accompanied with future reward in the world to come.

Pursue, my brethren, this method of reasoning—explore the pages of divine truth with this feeling, and explain them by this mode of interpretation, and you will speedily convert the oracles of heaven into a means of reflecting censure upon the Almighty, instead of imparting that hope and consolation, which they were mercifully intended to inspire. Thus, you might assert, that Enoch was untimely deprived of the enjoyment of life;—that, Job's exemplary and instructive patience was ill rewarded by the accumulated evils of poverty, sickness and disease,—that, the Patriarchs, for whom their heavenly Father had expressed a peculiar regard, were more unfortunate and more truly "only sojourners" upon earth, than were even the worshippers of strange gods;—and you might conclude this mode of reasoning by deciding, that the "glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of Martyrs," and all the immediate and faithful followers of the blessed Jesus, were hardly used, and unkindly treated for their long and painful services,

and that, when they looked for an immortal crown, they only received the terrors of persecution and the tortures of the stake. But, such conclusions are both absurd and impious. Argue, on the other hand, as you are authorized to do—that, all those exemplary characters were removed from this sinful world to receive the reward of their piety and obedience,—that, after the grave had closed upon their earthly remains, they were to rise from the dead, to die no more,—and, then, censure must give place to praise, and you will adore the goodness of God in Jesus Christ;—you will assent to the resurrection of the dead, as an event extremely probable, and naturally to be expected, as being most consistent with the inflexible justice and the unerring goodness of the Almighty God.

Here may be added, also, this incontrovertible argument—that man, through grace, being a free agent and capable of doing good and evil, is, consequently, answerable for his conduct. In this essential point he differs from every other order of the creation,—and, as he is not rewarded, in this life, for his endeavours after holiness, he must be hereafter. Endowed with the freedom of will, man may, by proper means, which are to be obtained by application to the throne of mercy in the name of his Redeemer, avoid the commission of evil—but, the other orders of the creation, being deprived of the freedom of the will, cannot act morally either

good, or bad, and, therefore, cannot commit sin. Piety, therefore, may reasonably look for a reward hereafter, and vice for punishment. Let but this just principle be admitted, and all the seeming partialities of Providence become explained. Then, to a right cause, we can attribute those effects, which have startled heathens and confounded infidels. We shall acknowledge that "God's ways are equal," and "that righteousness and equity are the habitation of his seat."

Our resurrection from the grave is, also, highly probable from the indications—or, as it were, prophetic changes, which surrounding nature continually exhibits. The furrows of the field may be called, my brethren, the grave of the vegetable world. In them the husbandman sows his seed—in them, the component parts dissolve, and, to all appearance, die—but yet from these furrows, from this grave, life and verdure rise, growing and maturing till the ripened season of the harvest. Who can behold the gloomy effects of winter and the reviving change of spring, without feeling the similitude that they bear to our own death and resurrection. Contemplating the leafless aspect of the towering forest—musing on the sterility of the cold and frozen glebe—might we not conclude, that all vegetation, like old and exhausted age, had fallen into oblivion, and had died to rise no more? The fact, however, is not so,—for the revolving season

calls into new life the sapless oak and the sleeping earth, and records in emphatic language the annual monument of man's death and resurrection. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, will he not much more clothe our bodies with a glorious immortality."

Nor are these indications of the probability of our resurrection confined to the revolutions and compass of a year,—for every day and evening sink into darkness and the shadow of death. Obeying the laws, which were imposed at the creation by the hand of the Almighty God, the great fountain of vital heat withdraws his glorious light. Then, in solemn silence, every colour fades—beauty vanishes—labor, and motion cease—and all nature mourns the interment of the world. But soon, again, the morning dawns. The sun arises in his strength—the shrowded earth, by the agency of the hand divine, throws off the robes of sepulchral darkness,—“man goeth forth again to his work, and to his labour until the evening”—and thus receives a daily lesson of his death and resurrection from the grave.

View again, my brethren, one other illustration of our resurrection from the dead. Consider how sleep, the very image of death, seals our whole frame in darkness and forgetfulness, obstructing the active powers of the body, and suspending the faculties of the soul. Yet, when the grand purposes “of nature's soft restorer” are fulfilled, soul and body

invigorated and refreshed, “in the twinkling of an eye” arise to new and active life. And to die, is but to sleep a calm, a sweet, a sound repose. “The weary are then at rest in Christ—waiting till the coming of the last day—when they shall rise from death and corruption to a life incorruptible and eternal.

If the resurrection of the dead thus appear a change not only possible, but, also, highly probable, and, in very many instances, agreeable to the course of nature, which, I trust, the foregoing observations, have not failed to shew—should I, in the next place, prove to you, that such a doctrine is pointedly alluded to in the old Testament, and was fully promulgated in the new by the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity, as the very corner stone of revealed religion,—you will yield your unfeigned assent to the article under consideration, and profess with your minister, “I believe in the resurrection of the body.”

The general promise given to man, “that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head,” has been frequently urged to shew at how early a period intimations were given in scripture of this fundamental doctrine—because, as part of the curse consisted in the death of the body, it could not be entirely removed without the resurrection of the body.

Abraham entertained a strong belief upon this

important truth, as may be learned from Saint Paul's account of that Patriarch's faith, which tells us, that he reckoned, or was convinced, "that God was able to raise up Isaac even from the dead, from whence, also, he received him in a figure."

The solemn attestation of Job, which is to be found in the burial service of our church, strikingly alludes to this revelation. "I know that my Redeemer liveth—and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

From these early scriptural authorities, I shall direct your attention to the consideration of some others, which the later prophets afford. "Thou turnest man to destruction;" declares the Psalmist, "and again thou sayest, come again, ye children of men." "Thy dead men shall live," proclaims Isaiah, "together with my dead body shall they arise." "Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust." Parallel to this is the following animated quotation from the same inspired author, which speaks of the resurrection of the dead, effected by the raising of the body of Christ. "And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb, and the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies." And not only is the same awful truth affirmed by the prophet Daniel, in the following words, but, some of the momentous

events are mentioned, which succeed the resurrection,—“they who sleep in the dust of death shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

These passages, which are extracted from the old Testament, carry with them no inconsiderable weight—but, on referring to the new, we shall find this doctrine amply confirmed by argument, and illustrated by example. In the time of our Saviour, and, indeed, in his presence, the Sadducees, a very powerful sect among the Jews, denied the resurrection of the dead as a thing impossible—and the Pharisees, who were most esteemed among that people for their biblical knowledge and their high veneration for Moses, required a stronger evidence to prove it than the Mosaic Law could give. Accordingly, we behold our divine Master reasoning upon, and explaining a very pointed passage from the book of Exodus. “As touching the resurrection,” says he, “have ye not read that which was spoken by God—saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “God is not,” as Saint Matthew adds, “the God of the dead, but of the living”—of those Patriarchs, who, though dead to the world, are still in a state of spiritual existence.

This doctrine was also very nobly defended and maintained by Saint Paul, when he was brought before Agrippa to answer the charge that was pre-

ferred against him by his malicious and bigotted accusers. "O king Agrippa, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." "But, having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, saying none other things, than those, which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should be a light unto the people, and unto the Gentiles."

If, my brethren, after these numerous scriptural arguments and assurances to prove the resurrection of the dead—if, after this, one would imagine almost irresistible weight of evidence, any of you should still remain doubtful of the fact—consider attentively the following impressive illustrations of divine power, and determine with yourselves what degree of confidence they deserve.—Go, first, to the house of the ruler of the Synagogue, and behold the little daughter of Jairus restored to the arms of her weeping friends. See her departed spirit recalled, and her lifeless body re-animated, at the command of the Lord of life.

Stay, now, near the gate of the city of Nain, and view that mournful crowd weeping with the wretched widow for the loss of her only son. Destitute and childless all her earthly hopes are gone, and she

has no resource but in Him, whose tender love protects the orphan and the widow. "Young man I say unto thee arise"—was all the effort that "He, who is the resurrection and the life," employed to raise the dead,—and at His word, the deceased arose, and spake, and was delivered whole to his mother.—Perhaps, however, it may be asserted, in the true spirit of unyielding scepticism, that "these instances are not sufficient—that these young persons were not dead, but sleeping." Follow we, then, our blessed Redeemer, "the first fruits of them that slept," from Jerusalem to Bethany. There, also, we shall hear Him commanding the dead to come forth, and raising with His potent voice a man who had lain in the grave "four days," and thus establishing, beyond the possibility of dispute, the power, and the glory of God.

The last proof of this most important doctrine is deduced from the infallible fact of our Lord's own resurrection from the dead. Recollect, my brethren, the public and ignominious circumstances of his death—the awful signals of his delivery from the grave—how the "bodies of the Saints arose and appeared to many"—the frequency of Christ's appearance to his disciples and to hundreds of his brethren—his glorious and public ascension into heaven, and the fulfilment of a promise, which was to be the sure evidence of both His and our own resurrection,—namely, the promise of the Holy

Spirit, who descended on the day of Pentecost, and continues still to operate upon our hearts, "convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment"—recollect these corroborating facts, and you will not, you cannot doubt of the resurrection of the dead.

On these clear and substantial grounds, you may reasonably join with the minister and congregation in this article of the Apostles' Creed. And should any one be still inclined to object, and, as the disputing Corinthians did, say, "how are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? They may be replied to in the words of the Apostle, "thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."—In the resurrection of the flesh, there are no doubt very many particulars, which must far surpass our finite comprehension. But this acknowledgment neither destroys that event, nor proves those writings to be erroneous, on which the doctrine is founded. If man could penetrate all the mysteries of the Godhead, he would cease to be finite, and exceed in wisdom the angels of heaven. However, therefore, the doctrine may be, at present, under clouds and darkness, still as Christians, we are required to believe it. We are to believe, that as Christ was seen in his human body

after his resurrection, so the same body which encloses our soul in this life,—that body, which, in a few more years, will be carried to the grave, and will moulder into dust, shall be raised at the last day and united to the soul, by which it is now enlivened and directed. “Our vile body shall be changed like unto our Saviour’s glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to himself.”

To this point, my brethren, the deductions of reason, and the oracles of God, without the assistance of which the powers of reason were of little avail, have directed our inquiries. Whatever is necessary for our instruction in righteousness, we find to be written, in large and legible characters, by the pen of revelation—“that he that runs may read.”—When, therefore, we are deserted by this safe and only guide, let us instantly suspend our researches, and avoid all useless and bewildering speculations respecting the nature of spiritual bodies, —or, on the distinctions that will be made between the various gradations of our future life. Thus shall we give proofs of our wisdom, and our faith—and a proper degree of blessedness will be vouchsafed to us hereafter, by Him, who has left this memorable saying, to inspire confidence in the word of God—“blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!”

To render the present subject profitable, I shall

observe, before I conclude, that the doctrine of the resurrection is full of comfort, and of the highest consolation to all true believers. "Had we hope only in this life, we who are Christians would be of all men most miserable." But, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the evidence of our own resurrection is confirmed, and thereby, an assurance is given for our entering, if we deserve it, a state of immortal glory and happiness, after our earthly relics are perished in the grave.

That you may form some faint notion of the indescribable consolation, which a belief in this article of our faith will produce in those, "who live worthy of the vocation, with which they are called," I will refer you; but not for the purpose of exciting an useless pang, or of wounding the mournful bosom, for I would rather heal than wound, I would rather comfort than distress the afflicted spirit—I will refer you to that period, which proclaims the approach of your own dissolution. Imagine, then, that you are reduced to the bed of languishing—by sickness, by age, or, by any of those casualties, which hasten that solemn scene. Consider every effort unavailing to resist the inroads of the last enemy. Let his triumph be now decided. Let your pulse have ceased to beat—your frame be already yielding to corruption, and carried to the common receptacle of every child of Adam—and, at length, let its com-

ponent parts become apparently inseparable from the earth around you. Represent to yourselves all these solemn circumstances—and still you have a sure and certain source of consolation—“for blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,” “even so saith the Spirit for they rest from their labors.” You shall rise again. Your faith in the author and finisher of your salvation shall have its reward. The trumpet shall sound, and your dead bodies shall be raised incorruptible, for “corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.” Supported by this glorious certainty, who, that believes in Christ, can go down sorrowing to his grave?

As then, my brethren, you believe in the resurrection of the body—if you hope for happiness hereafter preserve that body from impurity and from actual transgressions. Vile as our bodies are in their present state—subject to decay—the food of worms—in the fairest form but dust and ashes—they are to rise from the grave, and to be fitted for the mansions of unending blessedness. Do, I pray you, consider, what must be the event of a few more years. “Some will rise to everlasting happiness—some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Can you bear the thoughts of eternal misery? Earnestly implore, then, the grace of God, which is in Jesus Christ, to enable you to fight manfully against “the world, the flesh,

and the Devil," so that you may "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Lastly, if you do truly believe this article of the Apostle's Creed, you will give God the praise, and exclaim,—“ thanks be to God the Father, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Thanks be to his ever-blessed Son, who hath restored us to his offended Father and placed us in a capacity of eternal salvation! And thanks be to that adorable Spirit, who acts in the world, as our instructor, our disposer, and our sanctifier who brings us unto God. Henceforward then, my brethren, be patient under all the afflictions of life, and filled with the hope of a kingdom, where there is neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain. Diminish your affection for earthly things, and set them on those joys which are at Christ's right hand. Never be tempted to do that, which is contrary to the profession in which you are engaged—for, perhaps, in that thoughtless and dangerous moment, the sound to judgment may go forth, and you may forfeit that heavenly kingdom, which your Saviour died to obtain, and ascended into heaven to prepare, for all who love and serve him.

EVERLASTING LIFE.

Daniel 12th. and 2d.

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

THESE words present us with a plain description of the awful consequences of the last great day—when, both the righteous and the wicked will arise from their graves and enter into everlasting life—but with this tremendous difference, that the one will be for ever happy, and the other for ever miserable, “according to the things done in the flesh.”

So forcible and explicit, indeed, are these words of the Prophet, that Saint Paul frequently alludes to them in his impressive discourses concerning the divine origin of the Christian religion: “I have hope towards God,” says he, “which the Jews themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” And it was for the hope of that promise that he stood before, and was called into judgment by king Agrippa.

Nor could the Apostle have referred to a stronger testimony to corroborate the truth of the Christian religion, than that which the prophecies of Daniel supplied, for, to use the words of the greatest and most devout Philosopher that ever existed, "this religion is founded upon his prophecy concerning the Messiah." We read "that in him there was an excellent spirit," and signal and miraculous were the divine communications that he received, during the progress of a long and eventful life. He was delivered from persecutions as cruel and malicious as were ever inflicted on any child of Adam, and, notwithstanding the machinations of his enemies, he was advanced to great dignity, both in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus the Persian. Reflecting upon his ready interpretation of a dream, which had baffled the skill of all the Chaldean soothsayers, and which came to pass, as the Prophet had foretold,—remembering his solution of the mysterious characters on the wall, which predicted an awful and fatal catastrophe to an impious and luxurious Prince; his wonderful preservation in the lion's den—his firm resistance to a decree, which was repugnant to the laws of God and his conscience;—adverting, also, to Daniel's eventful prophecy of the seventy weeks, which was so minutely accomplished, and, further, to his prophecy "that after three score and two weeks Messiah should be cut off;"—doing this, we must acknowledge these incontestable evidences of

his divine mission, these testimonies that he was a person sent from God, and we must receive the words of the text as a revelation of what shall happen in the end of the world—namely, “that many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

From these most impressive words, we are to form the subject of the present discourse, in which, although there may be, at first sight, some apparent difficulty from the use of the term many, yet shall we, upon a nearer view, find that there is none in reality. The phrase is applied here by the prophet Daniel, as it is in various other parts of scripture, and is equivalent to all. By a similar expression, for instance, is universal redemption predicted in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied : and by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” The same word is used by our blessed Lord, when He told his disciples that “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” And the great Apostle to the Gentiles, in his Epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews, following the above authorities, applies the term many, in a general sense. In the former he writes—“as by one man’s disobedience many, that is clearly the whole human race, were made sinners ; so by the

obedience of one man—many in the same extensive sense shall be made righteous”—and in the latter Epistle, “Christ was offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.”

By these explanations the apparent difficulty is removed, and from the words of the text we learn this important doctrine,—that, at the last great and awful day of judgment, the souls and bodies of every descendant of Adam having left the dust of the earth, or, their respective places of corruption, without any regard to their situations in life, shall appear before the Son of man and glorified Saviour, and be judged according to the improvement of the talents, which were committed to their care, be they little, or great,—that such as have acted conscientiously according to the grace bestowed upon them, of which, an omniscient, omnipresent and impartial judge will rightly determine, shall rise “to everlasting life”—and, that such as have resisted the impulses of divine grace, have neglected to hear and to edify by the warning voice of conscience, and have died in unrepented sin, shall also arise, “to shame and everlasting contempt,” having abused the mercies and long suffering of God, and irreparably lost the happiness of their immortal soul—a condition which they will deplore for ever through the countless ages of eternity, in scenes of darkness, agony, and despair.

This, my brethren, is the natural import of the assurance of the Prophet in the text, and it will lead to an explanation of the last article in the Apostles' Creed, "the life everlasting"—a doctrine of indescribable consolation to the wise and faithful servant, who lives prepared, and is looking for the return of his Lord and Master,—but, of dreadful horror and apprehension to those, who "eat and drink with the drunken," "who walk in the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes," and neglect to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

From this portion of sacred scripture, then, we are assured, first, that all that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,—secondly, that some shall awake "to everlasting life," and thirdly, some "to everlasting shame and contempt."

As the resurrection of both soul and body was proved, in my last discourse, to be a possible, probable, and certain event—possible, because the same divine power, that formed our bodies from the earth, can with infinite facility bring them together again, and enliven the particles of which they were composed, how widsoever they may be dispersed, and wheresoever they may be deposited ;—probable, because it is consistent with the ways of Providence in many of the reproductions of nature, and because man would never have received a pre-eminence over every other order of earthly creatures, with respect

to reason, judgment, and the superior faculties of his mind, and be suffered to sink into the ground, like the beasts that perish;—and certain, because it was an event promised in God's first assurance of mercy to fallen Adam, and confirmed by the miracles of Christ, and by his own resurrection from the dead, "when He became the first fruits of them that slept," and permitted "the bodies of the saints to come out of their graves, and to appear unto many." These proofs, "that all that sleep in the dust shall arise," I apprehend are too fresh in your recollection, to require a second illustration of them, and I shall proceed, therefore, to shew that the doctrine of "everlasting happiness is consistent with the general declarations of scripture and with the suggestions of reason."

And with regard to the first testimony, I shall remind you of our Lord's assurance, which, were there no other authority, would be of itself conclusive, because it was given by Him, who came down from heaven "for us men, and for our salvation," and who, afterwards, ascended thither again, that He may come a second time in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, and raise them to life immortal. "He that heareth my word," says our blessed Saviour, "and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation."—Again, "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and

I give unto them eternal life." And, in another place, "whosoever believeth on the Son of man shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

And the reasonableness of this doctrine is very evident, from the consideration of the boundless mercy of God. Saint Paul justly observed, "that had we hope in this life only, we should be miserable,"—for here, the wicked, often prosper, and have riches in possession, whilst the humble and believing Christian is surrounded with difficulty and afflicted with poverty and contempt. Here, meek and suffering virtue is frequently trampled on and despised, whilst daring and unblushing wickedness is sought after and caressed. Such is the nature of things in this life, that good and bad men, like the tares and the wheat in the parable, must exist for a time together, and cannot be plucked up and separated before the general harvest, without producing material injury, and perverting the wise arrangements of Providence. But in the next world, all these inequalities will be rectified, and all these evils will be remedied. For then, the just and merciful ruler of the world may confer upon the righteous a crown of life, for the short afflictions of the present

scene—and, that He will do so, is certain from his own gracious promise, and is consistent with the knowledge that we possess of the divine nature.

We cannot, indeed, comprehend every particular included in possession of that eternal happiness, which is to be conferred upon the righteous, when they “arise from the dust of the earth,”—yet, such is the goodness of God, in Jesus Christ, and so graciously disposed is He to reveal whatever may animate us to go on “abounding in the work of the Lord,” that in several places of holy Writ, he has condescended to give us an account of some of the solemn proceedings, which are to take place previously to, and after the general judgment. As soon, for instance, as the resurrection of the body takes place, and all who slept in the dust of the earth have been summoned before the throne of judgment, and have had the sentence of everlasting happiness pronounced upon them, their bodies will be transformed into spiritual and incorruptible bodies. “From corruption they will be raised to incorruption, from weakness to power, from a natural to a spiritual body—and be fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.” Such, probably, if we may venture to surmise, as it appeared unto Peter, James, and John, at His transfiguration, “according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.”

The bodies of the saints being thus freed and purified from all tendency to decay, and prepared for the mansions of blessedness, their better parts, their immortal souls and intellectual faculties, that ray of the divinity, which neither in sleep, nor in death, is extinguished, will be immediately exalted to the highest state of unspeakable felicity. All tears will be wiped away. No more will the fears of death, or, the sensations of sorrow, of pain, or of crying be felt. Every thing worthy and pleasurable will contribute to their pure delight. And, as the grateful mariner, after weathering many a fearful storm and raging tempest, looks calmly back upon the dangers that he has escaped, and rejoices as he relates them in the circle of his beloved family,—so, may the righteous advert to the storms of temptation that they have resisted,—and to the trials, which they have passed and overcome. Among those dear objects, who shared, next to God, the warmest affections of their hearts, on earth, they may be employed in pouring forth their gratitude for redeeming mercy, in telling out with gladness the works of grace upon their souls, and in joining with the heavenly strains, in singing “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory! Blessing and honor, wisdom and power, thanksgiving and might be unto our God for ever. Hallelujah. Amen!”

This is but a very faint description of the happiness

of our future condition, although it is founded on a divine revelation of the joys of everlasting life. "Of our continuing city, "of our house eternal in the heavens," we can frame no adequate idea, for they infinitely surpass all that we can either think, or imagine. "Eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived," the future happiness of those who love and serve God here. But, we well know, "that blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord ; even so, said a voice from heaven—for they rest from their labours."

From this glorious prospect, from this soul-inspiring subject, I turn with pain and reluctance to the last particular mentioned in the text, namely, "that the wicked shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt." This most solemn and alarming doctrine is founded, as well as the former, on the authority of sacred scripture, and is equally consistent with the goodness and the justice of Almighty God. If it be not directly expressed in the Apostles' Creed, it is nevertheless clearly implied ;—and it is thus explained, in that excellent epitome of Christian doctrine, which is occasionally used in the service of our church, "at whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies ; and shall give an account of their own works. And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire."

Now, by referring to the authority of our blessed Lord, from which we learned the happiness of the

righteous after death, we shall find this most awakening doctrine fully confirmed. It was His advice, for instance, to prefer entering into life, "either halt, or maimed"—rather than "having two hands, or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." In His sublime description of the last day, He gave His hearers the form of the sentence, which will be passed on the righteous, and on the wicked. "Unto them on the left hand the King shall say, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: and they shall go into everlasting punishment." And, that these assurances may not be explained away to soften the punishment that is due to sin, and to soothe the apprehensions of the wicked for the consequences of their immoral lives, our Lord has repeated, with great earnestness, on many occasions the condition of sinners, under the sentence of eternal death, where their "worm never dieth, and their fire is not quenched."

One would imagine that these awful declarations of our future Judge were too clear and too explicit to admit of any misconstruction, did we not know that the eternity of future torments has been denied by some, who have preferred their own speculations to the positive assurance of the divine word, and their own opinions to the conclusions of the most learned and most pious commentators. Allowing that the phrase "ever," as well as "everlasting," is occasionally used in scripture in a limited sense, yet, how numerous

are the places, in holy writ, in which those words convey a never ending duration. Not to multiply instances, for it is by no means necessary, God is declared "to live for ever," and the righteous are said "to be for ever with the Lord." Now in these passages an endless duration, must be intended,—and if so, why not, also, with respect to the wicked,—for the words are precisely the same? If, indeed, the punishment of the sinner, in the next world, were only to last for a certain number of years, why should the fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels,—and for all wicked men be declared to be everlasting and eternal? It is said upon authority too indubitable to be either questioned, or disputed, "never to be quenched," and to issue from the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, in which the unrepented sinner is to be tormented for ever and ever.

Nor, again, is this solemn doctrine inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God. For He has left us at full liberty to choose "everlasting happiness," or "everlasting misery." The reward which He has promised to our obedience, is equal to the punishment that He has denounced upon our transgression—both, are to be from everlasting to ever-lasting. Now, if we break the condition upon which we are to secure our future felicity, we clearly do so, as the first Adam did, at the peril of our soul,—and we fall into the hands of our Judge, who may inflict, without the least injustice, what punishment

soever He shall please, even that eternal punishment, against which he has, in mercy, warned us. A mutual compact thus exists between us and the Almighty. A new covenant has been entered into, —and, if we regard the happiness of our souls through an existence, which shall neither have end, nor interval, we shall endeavour, through the grace of God, to perform our parts of it with the most scrupulous regard.

Having reminded you of some of the revelations of the joys of heaven, I proceed, in compliance with the necessity of the subject, to call your attention to the eternal horrors of futurity. A subject, of all others, the most melancholy that the minister has to explain, though it is, occasionally, his indispensable duty, “by the terrors of the Lord to endeavour to persuade men.”—The terrific images, by which they are described, in the word of God, must cause the stoutest heart to tremble. May such of you as are in your sins, be roused to escape from the wrath to come,—and may those “who are leading a new life and following the commandments of God,” continue to walk in his holy ways, that you may abound still more and more.

Should, then, the sentence of “depart from me, ye wicked into everlasting fire,” be pronounced upon you, at the last day, you will lose for ever the supreme glory and happiness, which God confers upon the holy angels of Heaven. Separated from

the good and virtuous, and rendered more miserable by the constant reflection of the pure joys which you had forfeited—the agony of mental and bodily sufferings will inflict a punishment that no imagination can conceive. Your ears will be deafened by the piercing reproaches, the wailing, the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth, of the wretched spirits who are likewise doomed to that place of torment. Your eyes will be blinded by the furies of darkness flying around you and increasing your misery, and your senses of taste and smelling nauseated by the suffocating fumes of fire and brimstone. Misery this, God knows! of itself, sufficient, but misery still more deeply aggravated by the consciousness of mercies, slighted and abused—of grace, resisted and despised. The viols of the wrath of God will be poured out upon you—and, even in prospect, there will be no hope either of terminating, or alleviating your anguish—“not one drop of water to assuage your burning thirst.”

These are some of the miseries of the bottomless pit, collected from sacred Scripture, and revealed to persuade us to escape for our lives, while the door of mercy is still open. Some, I know, have considered these torments of sin too severe, and have thought that no necessity existed for revealing the horrors of everlasting misery in such bold and impressive images. So, perhaps, my brethren, might your ministers imagine, if they were not convinced from

painful and daily experience, that men can read in their Bible, truths of the most alarming nature, and can hear the most awakening condemnation denounced against sin, with scarcely more than a feeble—a momentary impression. Do you then, beware, that any serious considerations which may have been excited by this subject, do not subside, as soon as you leave the threshold of the house that you are now in. Endeavour to improve any just and holy dread, that you may have experienced, into active resolution of amendment. If you tremble at the prospect of the consequences of a mispent life—remove your fears, by following the path that the Gospel points out to eternal peace and happiness. As soon as your soul is delivered from its earthly tabernacle, you will not consider the terrors of the Lord, to have been either unnecessary, or too severe—but, you will regard them as instances of divine mercy, intended to reclaim the hardened sinner, when the cords of tender love and gentleness would not bind him, and to keep the unsteady in the ways that lead to everlasting life.

And now, having shewn you upon what scriptural authority you are required to believe in a life everlasting, both as it regards the righteous and the wicked, and how consistent the doctrine is, with our ideas of the goodness and justice of God, you will feel, I think, as little hesitation in making this an article of your faith, as any of the preceding

in the Apostles' Creed. The little time that remains will not allow me to now recapitulate, and to endeavour to fix upon your minds the various doctrines, from the existence of a first cause to the end of all things, which have formed the basis of these discourses. The subject is deeply interesting to every Christian and of the very last importance, and demands an appropriate exertion on the part of the preacher to close his zealous, but humble instructions with energy and effect. Accordingly, with the blessing of God, I shall, in my next discourse, upon this subject, take a brief survey, of what I have attempted to illustrate, and, by concentrating the evidence produced, leave you, I hope, convinced, that you do rightly to believe in the articles of the Christian faith. I shall, therefore, but once more, request your attention to the articles of the Apostles' Creed—and, for the present, conclude with a few practical instances from the doctrine of everlasting life."

And first. As the word of God has revealed the consequences of a sinful life hereafter—let no seducing spirits, and such are ever on the watch and are ever indefatigable in their labours, tempt you to add "one jot, or tittle" to the truths of revelation,—or, to imbibe the dangerous and fanciful opinion, that future torments are not eternal. I call the opinion dangerous, because—if we wish to bruise the head of Satan and to persuade sinners by the terrors

of the Lord to flee from the wrath to come, we must preach as we are authorized,—“that the wages of sin, is death:”—we must, with all due seriousness and, concern, call upon the wicked to “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” “For the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into unquenchable fire.” I call, also, the opinion fanciful—because, it is founded on false interpretations and unjust conclusions; and he, believe me, who is bold enough to reason away the plain assurance of Christ, will not hesitate to undermine every other essential doctrine of Christianity, to suit his own mistaken purpose. An enumeration of the heresies that have arisen, from denying the eternity of future torment, would surprise those, who are unacquainted with the subject. From that cause did the doctrine of purgatory proceed,—and from the same cause has been engendered that still more impious and unnatural one, namely, that the most wicked men, may even that the infernal spirits will be restored to eternal happiness, after their sins have been atoned for by proportionable torments. These truths will convince every thinking mind, how easy it is to pervert the word of God, and will persuade you to lay hold of, and boldly to defend that form of sound doctrine, which has been delivered by Christ and his Apostles, and sealed, and rendered fruitful by the blood of the blessed Martyrs.

Secondly. As the consequences of a righteous and wicked life in another world are so frequently referred to by our Saviour and his disciples, you should preserve them always in your view, that the felicity of the one may confirm you in the ways of holiness, and that the terrors of the other may urge you to fly to your "hope"—to your "redemption"—and to amend your ways before you die. Only think how absurdly the men of the world act in this respect. How alarmed they are at every symptom which forebodes the death of the body, and with what eagerness they search for remedies, with what cheerfulness they submit to the most painful operations, to keep together a frail and corrupting carcase, a carcase which, in a few more years, must sink into dust and ashes in defiance of every art, every exertion to preserve it,—and who yet, think nothing of eternity—nothing to restore the health of their soul—which will never die, but which must live for ever in a state happiness, or of misery! But "what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

And this leads to my concluding observation—namely, the value of that redemption which was freely purchased for us by the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To Him we owe our reconciliation with an offended God. By his obedience to the conditions of

the first covenant, He satisfied the justice of His Father, and placed fallen man in a capacity of salvation. To His merits we owe the presence and direction of our invisible and divine guide, the Holy Ghost, who, if we attend to his influence, will lead us to heaven and immortal glory.

Let gratitude, then, for what Christ has done and suffered for us—let a laudable concern for our immortal soul, urge us to redeem the time we have lost, and to neglect none of those means which God has ordained, to confer on us grace and salvation, so, that when we are called from this frail and miserable world, we may not go with the impenitent into “everlasting punishment”—but with the righteous, with the saints and servants of the Lord into “life eternal and glory everlasting.” Amen and Amen!

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

1 *Peter* 3d, 15th.—*partly.*

“Be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

WHEN first the subject, which has been so largely discussed, was proposed to your consideration, my anxious hope was, and my earnest endeavour has since been, to impart to those, who might think themselves interested in concerns of such vast importance, a knowledge of the doctrines of revealed religion, in order to arrest, as far as my humble powers might contribute to do so,—the effects of infidelity, by providing you with arguments “to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,” and with motives of the most obligatory force, “to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith you are called.”

To remove that disbelief of the doctrines of the gospel which unhappily exists among us, and which appears to be too deeply rooted, and too insidiously and systematically maintained and propagated to admit

of complete exposure by any casual effort, I thought, and my opinion has been since strengthened and confirmed by reflection, that the most effectual method, under Providence, was, to obtain a thorough insight into the fundamental doctrines of our holy religion—because, when we are firmly persuaded of the existence of God, and have unfolded and established by reason and scripture the nature of his attributes—when we are fully acquainted with the merciful scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, and know how to value, and to apply for the all powerful assistance of the Holy Ghost—and, when we seriously look for the resurrection of the dead and an everlasting existence in the world to come, we shall know and feel the nature of our situation with regard to the present life, and to the next, and be able to impart the same essential knowledge to all, whom we can either govern by our authority, or influence by our example.

As the doctrines of our holy religion, those doctrines, which Christ and his Apostles taught, were collected together from the earliest period of the Christian dispensation, as early, indeed, as the disciples separated from each other at Jerusalem, to enter upon their respective ministries, and are contained in that form of faith, which is called the Apostles' Creed—it was from that profession of our belief, that I selected the subject of my discourses. Conscious, however, that the closest application to any subject,

and, particularly, in the sublime science of religion, would be unavailing unless accompanied with the divine blessing—and convinced, from every observation of human nature, how prone the wisest are to err, when left to the mere guidance of their own powers, I requested you, my brethren, at the commencement of my design, to bend with me before the throne of God, and to implore light and direction from above to precede our path, that we might mutually derive grace—you to hear and to digest, I to explain and enforce—and both to improve by those holy scriptures, which were written for our learning, and which are “able to make us wise unto salvation.” And on drawing so near to a conclusion, I have to lift a grateful eye of acknowledgment, for whatever aid the divine Being, has been pleased to afford me, and to request you, once more, to join your supplications to mine—that the termination of this labor may be under the same gracious influence, and that, as the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, “in every thing being enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, the testimony of Jesus may be confirmed in us; so that we may come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The intention of the present discourse is to take a brief survey of the several doctrines contained in the Apostles' Creed, that, by concentrating them in as close a point of view, as I am able, I may fix

upon your minds the excellence, and the reasonableness of the Christian faith, and, also, impress upon you how much it is your duty, as well as it is your interest to believe in, and to be directed by those doctrines, which it proposes for your acceptance.

This confession of faith, then, consists of three parts, which separately refer to the three persons in the adorable Trinity, and very properly commences with requiring your belief in—"God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth," in that supreme and independent Being, who has existed from all eternity, and is the first cause of all things visible and invisible. In the illustration of this leading doctrine of religion, you may remember, that the four following proofs were submitted to your consideration. First, that something has existed from all eternity. Secondly, that that existence has been acknowledged by universal consent. Thirdly, that it has been manifested by many external testimonies, such as in the frame and construction of the universe, and in the creation of man, the last and noblest work of God ; and, lastly, that it has been confirmed by divine assurance, by the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, in many instances most unexpectedly executed, and evidently under the agency of a superior and superintending power.

This first fact being established, we proceeded to consider the Supreme Being in the light in which revelation has described Him, and to which our

reason naturally assented, namely, in the relationship of a Father, in a character truly amiable and highly interesting to every pious mind, as being more the object of our hope and affection than of our fear and dread ; and, then we regarded Him, as possessing legally and of Himself uncontrolled authority and dominion,—and lastly, as the Maker of heaven and earth, which operation is so self-evident and so convincing, that had we not known the particular purposes for which it was inserted into the Apostles' Creed we should have considered the article superfluous ;—because, whatever has existence is either made, or not made—that, which is made is not God—but that, which is not made, is God. From this original cause must all created beings have proceeded, for the world could no more have arisen from itself, than this splendid building, in which we are now assembled, could have been erected without the aid of man, or its materials could have been arranged and joined together with such symmetry and effect, without the science and labor of the builder.

Having explained the first portion of the Creed, we proceeded to the illustration of the next, which treated of the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity—the only begotten Son of God—Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. And, as all that we can learn of his relationship with the Father, His union with human nature, and the particulars of His

wonderful incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection from the grave, and ascension into heaven, must be derived from revelation, I deemed it expedient to remind you, in an introductory discourse, of the authority of the holy scriptures, in which are recorded the mission, the divinity, and the earthly character of the Redeemer, by men, who were destitute of all human advantages, and who preached that glorious doctrine, which in defiance of the tyranny of the Magistrate, the subtilty of the Philosopher, the prejudice of the Greek, and the bigotry of the Jew, spread over, and enlightened the face of the world." "So mightily grew the word and prevailed."

Having proved the authority of the Bible, with a thorough conviction of the truth of the sacred writings, and with all humility of mind, I proceeded to convince you of the necessity of making the objects of your belief, those several articles, which related to the character of Jesus Christ. The name, for instance, by which the Son of God is called, and the nature of his office, as expressed in his title of Christ, were first explained—and we were led to conclude that the Messiah was plainly foretold, and fully expected to appear in the character of a "Prophet," of a "Prince," and of a "Priest," and that in "the fullness of time he did come into the world," and minutely fulfil the predictions of every Prophet,

who had either foretold his coming, or had described his sacred character.

As, our everlasting happiness, or misery, depends upon our acceptance, or our rejection “of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world,” I endeavored fully, and earnestly to enforce the influence, which this part of our subject should have upon our conduct ;—that, as a “Prophet,” we should yield a perfect and unfeigned assent to his Gospel ;—as a “Prince,” at whose name every knee should bend, and through whose all sufficient merits, deliverance from all our ghostly and bodily enemies can be alone expected, we should be faithful and obedient to His will, and trust Him with all our concerns ;—and that as our “High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” “we should pray to Him for grace, to guide and amend our lives, and to enable us to “work out our own salvation.”

After this essential part of a Christian’s faith had been explained, the next article, which claimed our attention, was the divinity of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord, and our Redeemer. At this period of the subject, the co-essentiality of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, was enforced, and you were reminded of our Saviour’s explicit declaration, “I and my Father are one.” “He in me, and I in Him,” and, consequently of the impiety and the falsehood of that doctrine, which

classes the Redeemer of mankind with fallible men, and which deems Him unworthy to receive adoration, and incompetent to satisfy the justice of God, and to make atonement for the sins of all mankind.

Having discussed these two mysterious articles of the Christian religion, and having left you to determine, whether a correspondence of terms and titles, equally applied to the Father and the Son, did not justify you in believing Jesus of Nazareth, the long promised Messiah, to be "very God of very God," I proceeded to consider separately, the various interesting particulars of his life, from the moment of his miraculous birth to his departure into heaven. "That He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, that He was crucified, dead, and buried; that He descended into the place, where other departed spirits were, and continued, during the time appointed, with them; that He rose the third day from the dead; ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come, to judge, the quick and the dead." In the examination of these various and interesting articles every circumstance of doctrine and of fact was referred to, which appeared to me to be connected with the subject, and calculated to increase our faith in the blessed author of salvation. And at the conclusion of each discourse, I submitted to your consideration, with all the seriousness I could command, and with all the fervor,

which the importance of the subjects required, such practical inferences, as with the blessing of God, would improve your lives, and advance your everlasting welfare.

Having proceeded thus far, I directed your attention to the last part of the Apostles' Creed, which related to the third Person in the blessed Trinity, namely, to the existence and divinity of the Holy Ghost, with his operations in this life, and His powerful influence to conduct us to eternal happiness in the world to come.

To that end, I reminded you, in the first place, of the name and title given to that adorable person, and of the nature of His sacred office, which manifested his divinity and personality, and, that as He is spoken of, in scripture, in the same manner as the Father and the Son are, He must be entitled to, and possess an equal participation of all the properties of the godhead—however, mysterious such apprehensions of the divine existence may be to beings, with the limited faculties and the finite powers that we now possess.

This explanation concluded, I advanced to that interesting inquiry, which illustrated his operations from eternity to the present time. You were reminded, in our progress, that the worlds were framed by the spirit of God, that the promised blessing of redemption was communicated to Adam, and afterwards to the Patriarchs, and the Prophets, by the

same divine Person—that, in the time of the Apostles the agency of the Holy Ghost was wonderfully and beneficially exerted, and, that it is now intirely owing to His sacred and gracious impulses, that our natures are regenerated, that we are awakened to a sense of our duty, that we have our spiritual dispositions cherished, and our souls sanctified and placed in a capacity of salvation. While I was submitting these proofs of the divinity and operations of the Holy Ghost to your consideration, I entreated you to ponder seriously upon the consequences of such solemn assurances. I requested you to remember the warning admonition of scripture “that unless you had the spirit of Christ abiding in you, you were none of His :” and I exhorted you to use the ordinary means for attaining his abode in your hearts, which were, to hear attentively” the word of God delivered, to pray humbly and earnestly to the throne of grace, for faith in the promises of the Gospel, to repent truly of your past sins, and to partake regularly and devoutly of the memorial of Christ’s death and passion, in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, so that you might receive that heavenly supply, which will refresh and strengthen your souls in your pilgrimage to the grave.

The next discourse explained the meaning of, or, what is comprehended in the expression, “ the Holy Catholic Church,”—namely, that it embraces, within its range, all who profess and preserve the faith of

Christ crucified, that it is “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”—that it is holy in its vocation, holy in its offices and obligations, and Catholic, or universal, in regard to time, to place, and to person.

In considering the next article of the Creed, I was led to explain the principal benefits that God bestows upon his universal Church, some of which are imparted here, and others are to be communicated hereafter. In this world, for instance, it was shewn that the followers of Christ partake of the enviable communion and fellowship, which the saints, or servants of God, have with each other, and with Jesus Christ their head—and that they receive the forgiveness of all their sins, actual, as well as original, through the merits and intercession of their blessed Redeemer, which is confirmed unto them, by the ministry of the Church.—And in the next world, it was seen from the united testimony of scripture and of reason, that the souls and bodies of the righteous are to be rescued from the power of the grave, are to be received into glory, and to enjoy for ever and ever a full, and perfect communion with the blessed Society in heaven. Whilst the wicked, such as never repented truly of their sins,—or believed in Jesus Christ for the pardon of them, notwithstanding all that He has done for the forgiveness and justification

of sinners before God—such, as did not accept, and would not improve the grace afforded them to forsake their sins, and return unto God, such will rise from their graves to a punishment that will never cease, but endure through all time, endless and indescribable.

Thus, my brethren, in as regular, and progressive a manner as I could adopt, and as the nature of my subject would permit, I have recapitulated the several articles contained in the Apostles' Creed. In explaining and enforcing at large, in my former discourses, the various and most important doctrines of this summary of our Christian faith, to the consideration of which you have so long yielded me your attention, my constant endeavour has been to express myself in language, at once plain and familiar, to use that form of words, which might satisfy the more advanced and better educated among you, and still be within the comprehension of my humbler and more unlettered brethren—so, that, like the Prophet's vision—"he who runs may read." Whether, or not, I have been successful in the attempt, it would ill become me to say,—nor can I suppose that the proofs advanced to establish the different doctrines, which have been discussed, have satisfied and convinced the mind of every hearer. But I may venture to hope and to believe, that very many of you have been rendered thoughtful, and that others

have been spiritually edified, and induced to make these vital articles of your faith the subject of your private and serious meditation.

The little, that now remains for me to do, I wish most earnestly to effect. It is to recommend once more, in conclusion, to your most attentive consideration, these solemn doctrines of our holy religion, and to impress indelibly upon your memory, that they will, most assuredly, “be an ornament of grace unto your head, and chains about your neck.”

I address myself, then, to you, who are professors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who believe in the articles of the Apostles' Creed, and, I trust, that is nearly all whom I address—and I intreat you to remember, in what an awful and a lasting manner, the conviction of the truth of those great doctrines ought to affect your hearts. Satisfied by a series of scriptural proofs, of proofs the most full and incontestable, that nothing in that Creed is introduced, but what the word of God has declared—with what veneration, with what profound regard should you defend its sacred articles? With what fear, with what reverence should you obey them? How ardently should you pant after them? With what earnestness should you prepare for the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?—How constantly should you keep in mind the sad nature of sin, and its wretched punishment hereafter? And with what perseverance and fervor should you implore the

great author of religion to preserve in your hearts the importance of that scheme of grace and mercy, by which you have been relieved from the powers of darkness, and have escaped the pollutions of the world, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? May you for ever "rejoice with fear and trembling."—May you continue to "press towards the mark for the prize of your high calling." May you continue to the end of your lives, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!"

I turn next to you, my brethren, who may have been led hither by curiosity, or with prejudiced minds, if any such there be, and I request you, candidly and impartially to determine—what degree of credit is due to those religious tenets, which have been lately discussed, and which are encircled with such a resistless chain of scripture argument, of reason, and of experience? Remember before it be too late, that they are not mere points of speculation, or of conjecture, which reach no farther than opinion, but, that they are subjects, which include in their information, all the doctrines of revealed religion, and, in their consequences, embrace all the best hopes and consolations of human nature. Whatever your conclusions on this point may now be, God grant, that in that awful hour, when we shall be no more exercised with the mysteries of religion, but shall see the Almighty "face to face,"—God grant, that your faith in his sight may

not stand reproved, but that it may appear, that during this your day of trial and investigation, you really afforded every possible attention to your religious duties suitable to their vast importance—that you did employ every means of information within your reach—that you did pray to have the veil removed that obscured your mental vision, and that you honestly applied your hearts to the “things which so nearly concern your peace.”

As for you, my aged brethren, whose trembling hands and feeble knees, too plainly indicate the near approach of that period “when the eye that now seeth you, will see you no more,” are you able to give an answer in meekness and fear to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you? Surely it is high time if you have hitherto slumbered away the precious moments of your existence, to awake from sleep. “The night is far spent, the day”—the eternal day of Jehovah “is at hand!” One more year, another week, or even another hour, may cause you to drop the mortal and perishing garments with which you are now clad, and to appear in robes of immortality, before the Judge of quick and dead! Ask your hearts, then, before you go hence, and be no more seen, whether you have made these doctrines the subjects of your frequent and serious contemplation? Are you well grounded in that knowledge, which will alone “make you wise unto salvation?” Have you practiced, to the

best of your ability, the duties of the Gospel? Oh, consider, as the props of your earthly tabernacle are falling to decay, whether you can look forward with confidence, and exclaim with the Apostle—"I know, that if my earthly house be dissolved, I have a building of God, an house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

I turn, in the last place, to you, who are entering on the active scenes of life, and with all the concern of a tender parent, I exhort you, while you are young in years, and apparently in health, to be wise betimes, and to provide for your eternal welfare. The duties that you are now expected to perform are proportioned to the powers that you possess, and to the progress that you have made—but remember, that the claims of to-day are doubled in danger and difficulty if they are neglected till the morrow. Thus, then, the doctrines of the Gospel concern you, as well as the more advanced in life. The youth of Timothy, to whom Saint Paul wrote, did not exempt him from being "an example of believers, in word; in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." And with what accumulated force ought this consideration to affect you, when you take into account also, that your time of exertion, is not only short, but, even under the most promising circumstances, always uncertain. Had you seen, as he; who addresses you, has so often seen, the youth of both sexes consigned to the yawning grave—had

you heard, as he so often has, the bitter sighs—the unavailing grief of disconsolate parents for the object of their hearts unexpectedly summoned to another world, in the full bloom and vigor of their days—you would, I think, pay more regard to the events of futurity than too many among you do,—you would never forget, that the next day, or the next hour, may destroy the possibility of every earthly effort, and you would be aroused “to remember your creator in the days of your youth,” assured that the last enemy is impatient to draw the remainder of every man’s life, “and that God will bring to judgment every work, and every hidden thing, whether it be good, or evil.”

If I have exhausted the patience, with which you have usually heard me, I entreat you, finally to recollect, that to press into observance the doctrines which have formed the subjects of the preceding discourses, and to fix them on your minds through life, were objects of no common moment to be accomplished. All that my slender abilities could effect, has been now performed, and I conclude my observations with the solemn words of Saint Paul, “Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them, who are sanctified.”——
“And may God Himself, and our Father, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, make you increase, and

abound in love one to another, and toward all men ;
to the end He may establish your hearts unblame-
able in holiness." Amen.

THE END.

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